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PlayStation®2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-AUSTRALIA

the Getaway

FIRST!

Massive review of Sony's cracking Cockney crime spree!

REVIEW FRENZY

Auto Modellista
007: Nightfire
Haven: Call of the King
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V-Rally 3 » Treasure Planet » MX Superfly »
PLUS » Mortal Kombat: Dark Alliance » Spyro Enter the
Dragonfly » Big Mutha Truckers » Defender » Micro Machines »

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ISSUE 1
JANUARY 2004
\$5.99



REIGN OF FIRE
Based on The Movie



SUMMONER 2
RPG

Looking For Something

AUTO MODELLISTA
Racing



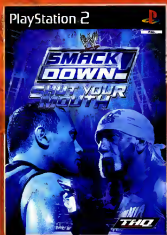
RED FACTION 2
FPS



THQ

CAPCOM
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boom!



To Play

This

Summer

ISSUE 10 // JANUARY 2003

GAME REVIEWS



ON THE COVER:
Sony's latest cockney crime fest is
here! The 2003 top 100 list!

058 THE GETAWAY

Some things are worth the wait... this is one of them. Full review of Sony's cracking cockney crime-fest.

064 AUTO MODELLISTA

The Gran Turismo of cartoons? Check out our review of the world's first cel-shaded racer to find out.

068 VIRTUA TENNIS 2

Discover why Sega's smashing Tennis simulation is the new top seed on the PS2 circuit.

070 HAVEN: CALL OF THE KING

072 LORD OF THE RINGS: FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

074 STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

076 NFL 2K3

077 NBA 2K3

078 HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

080 SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY

082 DEFENDER

083 WRECKLESS: THE YAKUZA MISSIONS

084 007: NIGHTFIRE

086 MICROMACHINES

088 ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY

089 SUPERMAN: SHADOW OF THE APOKOLIPS

091 LEGAIA 2: DUAL SAGA

093 GUM BALL 3000

093 CRASHED

093 RALLY FUSION

094 REIGN OF FIRE

094 VIRTUA COP ELITE

YOU BRING THE TABLE



WE BRING THE CHAIRS



PlayStation®2

WE BRING THE WHIPPIN', YOU BRING THE ASS!™

SMACK DOWN! SHUT YOUR MOUTH

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Battle Engine aquila

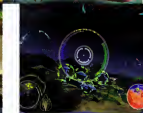
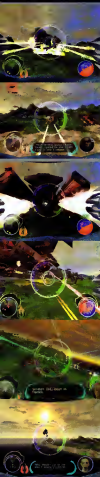


PUBLISHED
INFOGAMES
CLASS TIME
SHOOT 'EM UP
OUT JANUARY
PLAYERS 2
FULL GAME 3-4

YOU'RE HERE TO protect your beleaguered colleagues and destroy all of the aggressors. The radar bottom left will help you keep track of who's who - red dots are bad guys, while yellow folk are friendly. The blue dot is your base, which is being attacked from the south and the east. The scale at the top allows you to power up your weapon (press and hold fire to deliver a more powerful shot).

The Battle Engine has two modes, *Flight* and *Skuller*, allowing you to attack from the air and ground. However, flying drains a huge vat of your energy meter (shown via the blue scale on the left of your HUD). Landing tops it up again.

Shield strength is shown via the green scale on the right, while the map is bottom right.



THE CONTROLS

- ↑ Movement
- ↓ Look around
- Left Stick Shoot
- Right Stick Aim (in air)
- △ Attack (landing)
- Auto-aim (auto)
- Fire
- △ Change weapon
- Pause game

ON THE DVD

ISSUE :: 010

V-RALLY 3



JUST ABOUT TO go out and buy Colin McRae Rally 3 will hold your horses. Interspace wants you to play a chunk of their on-video-for-months V-Rally 3 via this demo first.

Select Last Home to put your nose into the game, then Clay to progress. You're then located in a pack of five demo drivers racing the Peugeot 206 Rally Chrome. Show View for a better view of the action, then hit Okay when you've had enough.

You're now in the thick of it. The second Piked track stretches before you, made up of four checkpoints. Your progress against the leading driver is shown top right. Drive quickly and enjoy your efforts again at the end via the WGR live replay deck.



PUBLISHED BY
INTERSPACE
GAME TYPE
RALLY SIM
CPU SHOW
PLAYERS 2 FULL
GAME 3.0



THE CONTROLS

- Enter Stop
- W Accelerate
- S Brake
- Q Handbrake
- Q Change view
- Tab Back on track
- W Four wheel
- W Gear shift up
- W Gear shift down
- W Options



THERE ARE TWO levels to choose from here (start by peeling up and down on the D pad or the L stick). The first is platforming (see [p.106]), running, collecting etc) and a list of the tasks to be accomplished is shown by pressing [R]. You'll find lots of sub-missions unfolding as you play but the extended In-game help will show you on the right track. The dial (top left) shows your strength with a further display showing the status of your current power-up.

Returning to the green portal at the levels start will allow you to try the game's second level. This stage shows off the Riding mode, and has its own set of challenges. Again see the full list of tasks by pressing [R] and anything that looks like meteor rock.



THE CONTROLS

- Performance
- Lock: Movement
- D pad: Aim
- [R]: Jump
- [L]: Roll
- [X]: Attack
- [Y]: Activate hub
- [C]: Check
- [O]: Order view
- [P]: Pause with touch input

- Recharge
- Lock: Steer left/right
- D pad: Steer left/right
- [R]: Accelerate
- [L]: Brake
- [X]: Jump
- [Y]: Drop ball
- [C]: Activate hub
- [P]: Pause with touch input



KillaBots: ACE and the PS2 version of the game



SUCH IS THE priority that they've not only included the world's longest in-game legal disclaimer, but they've also ditched up three seasons' sections of MX Superfly to enjoy too.

In the Exhibition Race (selectable from the main menu after pressing [R]) you complete against a complete field of real racers over the stripped-down distance of a single lap (this being merely a taste of the full game's racecourse).

The Exhibition mode lets you ride like a boss around a desolate set of hills while the mini-game lets you live the dream and deliver pizza on a motorbike. Locate the pizza scattered around the deserted city (the brown dots on the map) and take them to the designated drop zones (the red dots on the map).



PUBLISHED BY GIGAWATT GAMES
OUT NOW
PLAYSTATION 2



THE CONTROLS

- Lock: Steer left/right
- [R]: Accelerate
- [L]: Brake
- [X]: Boost
- [Y]: Load checks
- [C]: Load checks
- [P]: Outlets

CHECK OUT THESE VIDEOS OF THE HOTTEST NEW PS2 RELEASES...



DEFENDER

See how Defender has come of age. Once it was just a flat and dull arcade game, now it rips up your PS2 and stencils your eyeballs too. Look. Reason #1: It's now in 3D. Reason #2: It's now on PS2. Tease the alien skills provided by this dusty 2002 reworking.



MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE

Tearing the gate out of the bottom-up arena (often rather too literally), Mortal Kombat is back and badder than ever. The old favourites such as Scorpion, Blanka, Johnny Cage, Kano and Sub-Zero return plus a cast of newbies, all with an unrelenting lust for blood. See the latest incarnation of the series right here.



BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS

When you think of the Deep South you think of moonshine, Seneca and his Bandit, and a worshipping young boy with a darling beerjo. Add to this list Big Mutha Truckers, a game featuring trucks, truck driving and the assorted joys of rebelled rebellion.



SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY

Put any thoughts of pine, ritual overload and Delphinian-style woodland ambush behind you and enjoy the heights of a young dragon with recharged on his back. This cute platformer has made the move from mobile, and see what we said in the review on page 121. Ah, that's better. Emulate dusty Robin...



MICRO MACHINES

The thinking is that you can never get big maintenance. But we beg to differ. We prefer our machines to be as large and as threatening as possible. Resemblance enough. But come on, where would you rather drive? Around the Nidabarg or across the kitchen table?

UNCOVERING THE LATEST PS2 NEWS EVERY MONTH

SPY CONTRIBUTORS: GARY TOLSON, JACOB MILLER, JESSIE BARNARD, DOUGLAS WINTERS, LARRY SPYGLAS

THE R'SE END OF THE GAMING WORLD

It was only ever going to take one person to put a bullet in the chances of new classification standards...



IT'S TIME for the video gaming collective of Australia to screen in a cage as those in power who are deciding to us what forms of entertainment are acceptable in this country. It's no great mystery or surprise to Australian gamers that Grand Theft Auto, Vice City has been modified for its Australian release, with the same prostitute-related content being removed that we missed out on in Grand Theft Auto 4. Now anyone who has seen these scenes from an overseas version of the game knows that were not missing out on anything special in this rugged, busy folk, but a rocking car wasn't worth spending the extra bucks to import the game (but truth be told, the point is that we are the only country on Earth that had the chance of the game modified at all in effect, we live in the land with the world's strictest video game censorship). Of course, scenes such as the GTA prostitute encounters would be considered fine in a "R" classified game, but the OFLC does not have such a classification category for computer and video games, it's something most Australian gamers have wanted for some time, and when Attorney-General Daryl Williams spoke at Sydney's

Chinese Consulate in May 2001, things sounded promising.

"The Howard Government pursues classification policies not censorship policies," stated Williams, who went on to declare that results "should be able to read, hear and see what they want." Well, apparently this doesn't include adults who want to play video games, they're obviously second rate citizens in the eyes of the government. If the recent turn of events are any indication,

THE NAIL IN THE COPPIN

After much talk of removing the current classification system for computer and video games in Australia, Daryl Williams, and also the Attorney-General for South Australia have put an end to efforts of those who have worked hard for the introduction of an R classification in Australia by voting the amendment to kill. The Commonsense position is that it will not support the expansion of the R18 classification to computer games, in view of the reactive nature of computer games," said Mr Williams' spokeswoman.

"It's appropriate to have a stricter regime in relation to this area... the likelihood of children gaining access to adult computer games increases if the

material is legally available."

The sentiment may sound conscientious and noble in theory, but this hardly addresses the reality of the situation. Statistically 90% of Australian video games are adults, and over 90% are over the age of thirty-nine. The system currently caters for the minority rather than the majority.

That aside, regardless how the classification system works, kids are often getting their hands on games over the Internet or through pirate connections whenever they want to get a title that isn't coming out here for any reason. So when the gaming community takes matters into its own hands and goes about acquiring games through means outside the official channels (such as piracy or piracy), is it not their fault?

Of course, it's impossible to get games on the Internet to play and importing due to the lack of records that are not even costs which the Australian distribution companies can have (as on 0800 400 000 was recently refused classification in Australia due to its nudity content). When asked what this meant from a financial point of view, Daniel Armstrong, PR manager for of

Accolent said, "There is a charge attached to the OFLC submission process and this is true whether the game is rated or refused. If the game is modified then the submission process starts again, with another charge, and there is still no guarantee the modifications will make it suitable."

Those are the direct costs of classification but there's more to it than that. Armstrong added, "On top of this you are also spending dollars on designing and producing advertising materials, point of sale and other merchandise that might be attached to the product from a marketing and sales point of view."

Perhaps one day our classification system will catch up to the rest of the world and the politicians will realize that their stance on these matters like this just hurts the local industry rather than genuinely protect the kids. ☐ **OFF**

PHO-ACTIVE PETITION

Let your voice be heard and make a difference.

An online petition has been set up to express their disappointment at these recent turn of events. Sign online and head over to <http://www.petitiononline.com/sga01sga.htm> get classified to add your name on the growing list to add your voice to the much needed reforms.

YUNA GETS TOUGH

Square unveils Final Fantasy X-2 at its Autumn Meeting 2002.

WHILE IT'S EARLY DAYS yet for a Final Fantasy X announcement, footage from the imminent FFX spin-off X-2 was shown for the first time at Square's press conference in Tokyo. Sporting a shiny new look, Yuna takes center stage in this new adventure. Reportedly a gift from fellow FFX or FFXii, her level-friendly get-up consists of halberds partially covered by a half-skirt, a low-cut top and boots. A pair of pistols complements her action heroine makeover.

At this stage very little has been revealed about the game's story which takes place two years after the events in FFX. But a new female character is promised and by making a variety of level destinations accessible at the outset, Square hopes to avoid the linear plot progression that restricted go-anywhere adventuring in the course title.

Among the trio her last coats were glimpses of Yuna's village and an ancient tower in the clouds. There were also what appeared to be playable sequences, which hint at some new in-game features. While exploration in FFX involved simply making location locations, Yuna was shown crossing a chasm by leaping onto a rock after between two cliffs.

Another scene saw her climbing up rocky outcrops à la Tifa Lockhart. FFX dished gamers with its cut-scenes and 3-D is no different. Photos of the characters riding exotic hover vehicles culminated with a stylish dance to a slow-mo CG sequence Yuna flapped through the air firing off her double pistols before landing in a crouched pose without breaking sweat. Yet despite these action overtones, Yuna isn't poised to go on a rampage with belt guns (Mo'Nique, FFX-2 looks set to continue the RPG tradition) combat will comprise of a battle system, although precise details of it remain under wraps at this stage. **EW**



DEADLY!

ONLINE EVIL

Capcom takes survival horror online in Network Biohazard.

ANYONE WHO'S WATCHED Night of the Living Dead or any of its sequels will appreciate what a terrifying prospect it would be to get stuck in a confined space with a gaggle of flesh-eating zombies. If you want to find yourself in this unfortunate predicament, you'd hope there'd be a few people on hand to help you blast your way out of the undead box to hell. Which is exactly what Capcom has cooked up in its forthcoming Network Biohazard. Likely to be Resident Evil, Network when it hits our shores.

The game is set in Raccoon City. **IS ANYBODY OUT THERE? GAMEPLAY WON'T BE AS CLEAR-CUT AS YOU'D IMAGINE FOR AN ONLINE CO-OPERATIVE GAME**

—with the story running parallel to that of Resident Evil 1 and 2—and will be played as a co-operative experience with up to four players in a networked game. Instead of dropping into the role of STARS operatives, you are now just an average Raccoon City denizen protecting your tail from zombie swarms (see Fresh Meat for character

IS MEAT YOU ONLINE? Time to get psyched up for zombie networking.

random). You'll also meet non-player characters who attack, help or rely on you for assistance.

Interestingly, Capcom has indicated that gameplay won't be as straightforward as you'd imagine for an online co-operative game—you don't just hook up with the other players, form a mob and proceed with the zombies lazing. To increase drama you are often forced to split up and then regroup later at a particular place. You'll also have to make a tactical decision on whether to continue if one character falls to show

No definite release date has been offered yet by Capcom, but now SCE has mentioned the publisher as an official online partner, a PAL appearance is all but assured. **EW**



FRESH MEAT

The infatigable pliable populace of Raccoon City end its evening Joseph character descriptions.

Karen: The politician. Not a brown American. **Deagan:** The surgeon. He also has a hand in the world of politics and is a divorcee.

Walter: The investigator. He has plenty of secrets.

Mark: The "holy" Bible. A worker at a security company who has lost memories of the Vietnam war.

Gilley: The witness. Her story is one of the worst in a plot. **Bowling:** The plumber. The type of guy who only goes out on weekends to be with

Alan: The brainiac. He's the only one who's not a zombie.

Alvarez: The journalist. Not very bright and often gets into trouble with others.

MINORITY REPORT™

STEVEN SPIELBERG'S FUTURISTIC THRILLER EXPLODES
ONTO ALL NEXT GEN GAMING SYSTEMS.
AVAILABLE NOW



EVERYBODY RUNS



Relive the movie's experience in an all-new adventure
as Precision in Top Gun John Anderton.



Take on hordes and robotic enemies with head-to-head
combat moves and an explosive arsenal of weapons.



Experience precision in every 60 levels of non-stop action-adventure
with futuristic weapons and devices straight out of the movie.



DREAMWORKS



PlayStation 2

ACTIVISION

activision.com

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NEWS FOR JANUARY

Arcade game purveyors are nearly dithering thanks to powerful home gaming consoles like the PlayStation2. But those interested in experiencing yesterday's classics can now buy genuine arcade cabinets on eBay for very low prices.

The Collectible Coin-Operated category is where you'll find old arcade machines, pinballs and accessories.

Prices depend on the rarity and popularity of the game, but sit-down cocktail machines generally sell for between \$400 and \$1000, while prices for stand-up cabinets start from \$200. Some of the most popular titles include *Demolition*, *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders*, *Ghostbusters*, *Galaxian* and *Frogger*.

When you look for *Arms* compatibility which enables you to easily swap the PCB and install a new game. Console PCBs in working order usually sell for less than a hundred dollars.

Meanwhile, pinball machines are becoming real collectors items and rapidly appreciating in price. The *Kiss* table from the '70s sold for around \$1000 a few years ago but now attracts up to \$7000. Popular modern table *The Addams Family* has leapt from around \$3000 to \$9000. Even the back glass on a pinball machine can fetch up to \$1000 as a piece of artwork. □ JW

GOT NO SOUL?

Could Aussie gamers be missing out on the next legendary fighting game?

WE'RE USED TO SEEING our favourite characters go up and down when they've got a little bit of trouble. But we here at OFS2 are wondering why we haven't been belted out about covering the upcoming *Soul Calibur 2* from Namco. Arguably the most heavily anticipated fighting game in the world of the moment, *Soul Calibur 2* doesn't appear to have an official distributor for PlayStation here in Australia.

Kate to get our hands on it ourselves, we approached Sony Computer Entertainment Australia on the matter but they said at this stage, they're not handling it locally. This is a first for a PS2 hit/no fighting game in Australia.

The problem is, after asking around, no-one appears to be ready to boast that wondrous weapon-based 3D fighting game is a part of their upcoming line-up.

OFS2 are certain that someone will be bringing the game out here, but until we can get confirmation of who'll be responsible for this one, we'll be waiting just as impatiently as the rest of you for more details on the next stage of history. □ DT



ATTENTION!

LIGHT MY FIRE

Warhammer 40,000 comes to PS2 in Fire Warrior.

BASED ON GAMES Workshop's Warhammer 40,000 battle game, *Fire Warrior* looks set to be a fast-paced shooter with a dark, rich background to draw on. Warhammer 40,000, while ostensibly a case of table-top clashes with metal and plastic miniatures, has an immensely detailed history woven into it. In the 41st millennium, humanity successfully won the wretched task of a forty-olive emperor and is besieged by alien races on every side, relying on production from the elite, genetically-engineered Space Marine chapters and the sheer dogged manpower of the Imperial Guard. Against this gloriously violent backdrop, the *Fire Warrior* is a game, albeit not a technologically advanced one.

In development by Nju Entertainment, *Fire Warrior* sees you

playing as a Tau trooper fighting in a campaign against the might of the Imperium – a calculated move to allow the player to see and experience the full superhuman splendour of the Space Marines. Fans of Warhammer will obviously find much to appreciate, but the game has been designed with the mainstream player in mind.

The early footage we've seen suggests plenty of gameplay and an army of enhancements to light it, most notably a rubble-swap play. A well-developed narrative looks to be in place too, as you move from small skirmishes to larger conflicts during the campaign.

Thanks to the Games Workshop connection, even at this stage *Fire Warrior* is looking to be a refreshing addition to the numerous ranks of sci-fi shooters. □ JB

IF FUGATIVELY SPREADING around a bloody lobby into the next room...



FROM THE DARK SIDE

Starline Studios' fantasy adventure Enclave comes to PS2.

OFS2 CAN REVEAL that Xbox 3D action-adventure title *Enclave* is in the process of being ported to PlayStation 2, when it was released for Microsoft's console earlier in the year it was met with mixed reviews – highly praised for its visuals and role, but criticised for its difficulty, occasionally repetitive gameplay and problematic character artificial intelligence. Luckily, during the port to PS2, developer Starline Studios had time to absorb the more negative feedback of the Xbox version and set about correcting the problems for its latest release.

Set in an elaborate fantasy world, players must choose to fight on the side of the Dark or the Light in an massive military campaign, taking the role of one of 14 characters each with their own swords, battleaxes, bows, daggers and magic/wand. It'll be unlikely to trouble *CNA* steadily indolent Lord of the Rings but if Starline can improve on the Xbox version as promised, it'll be enough to stir the soul of any fantasy action fan. □ GW



IF SEE THE LIGHT The PS2 port promises to deliver the Xbox version

CLASSIC SLASHING

Fifty years on, Kurosawa's epic Seven Samurai becomes a game.

AKIRA KUROSAWA'S SEVEN SAMURAI belongs to a canon of films, along with *Yojimbo*, *Crane Crane*, *Copacabana*, *The Godfather* and *Levi's Lawrence of Arabia*, that feature on many greatest films of all time lists. Don't worry if you haven't seen it – it's still terrific. And now, thanks to Japanese developer Sammi, you'll be able to play a PS2 version of the 1954 black and white epic.

The film charts the experiences of a group of seven Samurai brought in to protect a Japanese village from marauding bandits. The stunning Western-inspired battle sequences cry out for conversion into an all-out action slash-'em-up. In the style of *Dynasty Warriors* and *Onimusha*, it's one of the greatest – probably the greatest samurai movie ever made, said Matt Mueller, editor of movie magazine *Rital Film*. It's no surprise to hear that this legendary Kurosawa movie is making the transition to videogame-land. To ensure ultimate authenticity, one of Kurosawa's sons – Hideo Kurosawa – is scheduled to produce the game. □ GW



IF WHAT NO DVD? OFS2 are paying for a local Region 4 DVD release.

DEADLY

CHAOS THEORY

Fight with the dead in Capcom's Chaos Legion.

CAPCOM JAPAN, PUBLISHER

behind stylish PS2 games Onimusha and Devil May Cry, Capcom has announced a new fantasy adventure called Chaos Legion – and we've got the first screens of the game in action.

Based on a series that runs in Japanese magazine Oryon, the game's look has been described by Producer Yoshinori Ono as a "fantasy

opera with some RPG elements." It's this that will set it apart from the (Re) Onimusha and DMC series. Details are still scarce as the game has only been formally announced in Japanese, but for now, read the info we've dug up on the right. Looks like gothic gaming is here to stay for the short term at least. **GW**



WILL MY GOthic Onimusha multi-jordan to a surrounding world.

• Your hero is a knight called Ray, a knight. His mission is to protect a prince, King, Victor DeLacoste, who has just himself attacked in a sinister religious sect called Chaos.

• Your main weapon is the holy sword, although you'll learn there's also a dagger secret to mess up enemies.

• Chaos Legion is supported by the presentation and characters are voiced by well-known Japanese actors and actresses.

• We haven't seen many locations yet, but from these screens we can detect obvious gothic undertones in the castle surroundings.

• There's a lot of your master, called out by pressing the B button. They are the spirits of dead people who fight alongside you with their own signature weaponry – such as crossbows and swords.



BLUE LINES

Secret and special PS2 releases from the Blue Lines.

Newly formed company 3D Ages will re-develop old Sega games for release on PS2. First up are Super Monaco GP and Fantasy Zone.



Konami TYO has announced Silent Hill 3 will feature a new sound effect, cunningly titled "film noise", that replicates, yes, film noise.



THE HARDER THEY COME

Sierra's Die Hard: Vendetta set for a PS2 release? You read it here first!

PS2 CAN EXCLUSIVELY reveal that John McClane, the most unlikely cop in history is set to debut on PS2 in the first-person shooter Die Hard: Vendetta. A welcome return after previous outings on PSone (through various developers) the new game has already received positive reviews for its GameCube version, which is set to be released in early December.

There's been speculation that the film studios-developed game would be coming to PS2 way back in March, when Sierra showed off their forthcoming product line-up. While developing a 40% complete version on a Gamecube we asked a Sierra representative if the game would ever be ported to PS2. His reply was, "Yes." A PS-type hovering nearby then butted in with an even more categorical, "No!" This was a story enough for us.

What most impressed was the

film's death of detail. McClane had an impressive range of moves from jumping, climbing, swinging, pushing and pulling, to leaning around corners and squeezing through narrow gaps – all of which were depicted through realistic animation.

The way characters interacted with each other was convincing, too – terrorists were shown to respond differently to any number of stimuli including pain (at which there's plenty) and heat, deemed effective when McClane set an enemy on fire. This is promising that the script will include plenty of McClane's trademark one-liners and cinematic cut-scenes, reminding us that Die Hard: Vendetta is, after all, based on a much loved movie series. Expect an official release date soon. Until then, "Yipes-4-jay, mother..." and you know the rest. **GW**





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LA LAW
Merrill's at the
City of Angels

INTERIOR MOTIVATION
The cars have been
artificially designed.

SEXY MIDNIGHT RUNNERS

What can *Midnight Club 2* offer that *Vice City* can't? *Spy* investigates...

WHAT IMAGE DOES the concept of illegal street racing conjure up? A bunch of bogan boys dundertrotting modified hotrod up motors around a McDonald's car park? Or maybe a low-sportsy chicks taking their post-banquet focus on two laps of the bus depot. Either way, it sounds pretty unglamorous.

Change the location to LA, Paris or Tokyo and swap kit cars for retro ad-up Lamborghinis and Suzuki Superbikes, though, and it's a little more exciting. It's this squalor that Rockstar's new street racer *Nightclub 2* has opted for taking its lead from blockbuster films like *The Fast And The Furious* as well as a rather underground amateur video called *Gumbay* in Stockholm. *MC2* has gotten a long way since the first

launch title was released in October 2000. "The original was a bit of a rush job and very much imperfect, so we were very keen to do a sequel," admits Dan Houser, Producer at Rockstar. "For the sequel we've thrown away all the original technology but kept in the core concept of street racing."

There are now three cities, each with weather effects (like rain and fog) plus variations on night-time lighting – dusk, midnight and dawn. Roadside objects and buildings are noticeably improved and different locales such as docks, ghetto neighbourhoods and shopping districts are now recognizable within the featured cities. There's also plenty of glowing neon, gleaming rain-soaked roads and sparks as

you grind car or wall. The maps themselves are vast, offering some 90-100 square kilometers of multi-lane track with ramps and hidden tunnels playing an important part in time-saving short cuts.

Despite the major graphical overhaul, injection of speed levels comparable to *Burnout 2* and *Need For Speed 3* and the classy motorcycles, *MC2* may suffer by comparison to its epoch-defining stablemates *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. It's hard to see how gamers will react to a title that appears to ape the illegal driving elements of *GTA* – but is missing the all important 'get out and beat someone up' aspect. We'll report back in an extended playtest next month. *MC2* is set for release in January. **CW**



CRUEL SICK
Housers can't stomach
shameless quest.

MUGGLING IN
The AI can provide
tough opposition.

ROAD TEST

Putting the vehicles of *MC2* through their paces...

Motorbikes

We take a road of a motorcycle on a test ride around Los Angeles. It's tempting to just open the throttle and burn down any corners of street road you can find – like we did – and promptly crash. Mean world use of **A** and **D** (brake) enables you to lean out and coast a steeper turn for light braking. Pulling back on the accelerator shifts and holding down **W** initiates a wheelie, while pushing forward does an evasive.

HANDLING Forward, backward and left or right steering take mostly takes a while to master. But holding back the **brake**, unloading of nearly all weight through heavy braking down a steep boulevard or Tokyo freeway.

Cars

Putting the story line into the test we discover that *MC2* won't disappoint speed freaks. Once a race and – worst case – it all ends in a fiery ball of flames. Accurate physics of a toughened car to surprise incoming traffic. The use of multi-lane tracks keeps us engaged in a cut-throat short cut, taking a spin through the Los Angeles with a large open street window and underground in the fields concrete.

HANDLING Very smooth. The broken **A** or **D** often cause the back end of the car to swing out, which is great for turning corners but awkward when you're trying to slip in a tight line. A fast time trial however will feel like an expert driver's history.

CALLING ALL HORROR FANS

H.P. Lovecraft's world of horror hearkens to PS2

ANY FAN OF HORROR (horror) will know that H.P. Lovecraft is the granddaddy of creepy tales, leaving written countless short stories in the early 1900s. His works are far from very reading but he had a true grasp of how to convey terror with the written word. Come 2004 we'll see if UK developer Headfirst have any luck turning Lovecraft's weird ideas into something scary through the more contemporary format of video gaming with the recent announcement of *Call of Cthulhu: Hearted Legacy* for PS2.

Headfirst already have another

Call of Cthulhu game, the first person adventure, *Dark Corners of the Earth*, in development for PC. However, *Hearted Legacy* will be a third person adventure, providing a more traditional survival-horror take of things.

Lovecraft's works focus heavily on the concept of the 'insanity' caused by contact with the Old Ones and other creatures that prohibited his literary works. *Hearted Legacy* should be no different, with Headfirst claiming a sanity system will be worked into the game. Thus, exposure to things that human beings just weren't meant to see will

lead to things like hallucinations, or a need for a quick rest of underwear. The idea has been done before with games like *Thief*, but there's certainly opportunity for more variety and depth in this disease than what we saw there.

We'll keep bringing you the game news of this one as more info becomes available, but don't hold your breath, the game could be as far as two years away! **OT**



SHOOTING GALLERY
Make every shot
your best. All
the latest news
for PS2 fans.

The Shooters 2
We'll start out
by saying that
out the drama
dramatically moved
operation.
However, it seems
a group of such
books that read
in order to play
with the game.
We'll keep you
informed as we
move to
www.headfirst.com/2004/ps2
for further details.



incoming

PS2 & XBOX GAME TOP 20 GAMES

RANK	TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER
1	Halo: Combat Evolved	Adventure	EA
2	Grand Theft Auto 3	Adventure	Infogrames
3	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
4	Final Fantasy X-2	Adventure	SCE
5	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
6	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
7	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
8	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
9	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
10	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
11	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
12	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
13	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
14	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
15	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
16	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
17	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
18	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
19	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
20	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA

PS2 NOVEMBER TOP 20 GAMES

RANK	TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER
1	Halo: Combat Evolved	Adventure	EA
2	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
3	Final Fantasy X-2	Adventure	SCE
4	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
5	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
6	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
7	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
8	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
9	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
10	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
11	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
12	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
13	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
14	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
15	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
16	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
17	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
18	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
19	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA
20	Gran Turismo Sport	Sports	EA

PS2 RELEASE SCHEDULE

DATE	TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER
1	Alone in the Dark 3	Adventure	SCE
2	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
3	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
4	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
5	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
6	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
7	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
8	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
9	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
10	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
11	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
12	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
13	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
14	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
15	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
16	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
17	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
18	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
19	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
20	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision

PS2 RELEASE SCHEDULE

DATE	TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER
1	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
2	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
3	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
4	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
5	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
6	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
7	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
8	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
9	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
10	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
11	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
12	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
13	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
14	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
15	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
16	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
17	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
18	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
19	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision
20	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	Action	Activision

re-con (n): the sole unit an infantry battalion relies on for intelligence operations. Arguably the most specialized and highly trained troop formation of any regiment.

If you meet them in combat...



YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD.

Prepare yourself as the PC Game of 2001 hits
PS2 and Xbox in time for Christmas.

Features missions from the original PC game
and the add-on, Desert Siege



PlayStation 2



from the makers of
RAINBOW SIX

Tom Clancy's GHOST RECON

Available at these and other good retailers



Harvey Norman



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MONITOR CONTRIBUTORS: DAN TOOSE, TRISTAN OGILVIE, JASON HILL, ERIC BRATCHER, PAUL FITZPATRICK, ADRIAN LAWTON, AMOS WONG, MARK WALBANK

Previewing the new games you voted to read about!

WELCOME TO MONITOR!

SO WHAT'S ALL THIS THEN? It's our brand new previews section. Our pledge is to keep all the big games under constant surveillance, with direction you! Whenever a cool new game bleeps loud on your radar, write to us – we'll dig up exclusive new screens, information and interviews with the creators, or bring you first impressions from playable code.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED? To vote in our Most Wanted charts and make sure Monitor covers the games you want, email us at OPS2@derwenthoward.com.au or visit our Web site at au.playstation.com. Get voting now!

INFO BOX It's here you'll find out who makes a game, how complete it is, when it's due to hit the stores and if there's any more information online.

OPINION BOX What do we think of it so far? We reveal our thoughts and also include what you'd like to see in the game – visit the forums at au.playstation.com to get involved.

INFO BURSTS Keep an eye out for these blobs, where we'll drop in facts, rants, quotations, devil's advocate opinions and anything extra you should know.

LATEST SCREENS So how's the game looking? We show the hits of the future in all their visual splendour.



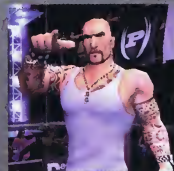
MOST WANTED

Which upcoming games do you want to see more of? Email or write to us and we'll uncover the latest details on your future favourites!

POSITION	GAME	WHAT?
1 ▲	DEVIL MAY CRY 2 OPS2 finally get a good hands-on with Capcom's sublime sword-slinging sequel.	HANDS-ON PAGE 24 EXCLUSIVE!
2 NEW!	SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS Not just the first squad-based online shooter, but the first game to use voice communication – no wonder you're excited!	NEW MODE PAGE 27 EXCLUSIVE!
3 ▶	METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE Snake sneaks up the charts and we play his first VR Missions.	HANDS-ON PAGE 27 EXCLUSIVE!
4 NEW!	SILENT HILL 3 Our man in Japan Amos Wong gets an exciting hour with Konami's next survival-horror gem. Roller coasters? We're not sure that's scary...	60 MINUTES PAGE 32 EXCLUSIVE!
5 NEW!	PRIMAL The screens we showed back in issue 5 obviously excited some OPS2 readers. We lock Tristan away with an early build of this action-adventure with a difference.	HANDS-ON PAGE 34 EXCLUSIVE!

ALSO IN monitor THIS MONTH

DEF JAM VENDETTA	PAGE 27
CONTRA: SHATTERED SOLDIER	PAGE 35
SWORD OF THE SAMURAI	PAGE 36
JUDGE DREDD VS. JUDGE DEATH	PAGE 37



Which forthcoming games would you like to see in Monitor next month? Visit the forums at au.playstation.com, email us at OPS2@derwenthoward.com.au (remember to put 'Monitor' in the subject line) or write by post to Monitor, Official PlayStation 2 Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 2022. Vote now!

NAME Devil May Cry 2
PUBLISHER Capcom
DEVELOPER Capcom
WEB SITE www.capcom.co.jp/devil2
RELEASE March 2003

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE 75%



■ **DEVIL'S TOWER**
Kicking demonic ass is all the more satisfying against great backdrops.

■ **DEATH FROM ABOVE**
Flying isn't the only benefit of this form. Lightning death anyone?

GRUDGE MATCH

Dante's return is bound to collide with Sega's anime-inspired Gungrave. But, despite the latter's high-octane action and slick cut-throat style, safe money has to be riding on DMC2 as the sure-fire victor. Take a look at these screens and decide for yourself.



■ **FLYING LOW**
Wings mean that Dante can access important areas.



■ **GIVES YOU WINGS** DMC2's sense of style is impressive.



■ **SLASH AND BURN** You can expect stunning visual effects in this sequel.

■ **LOOKING SHARP** Firepower like this will make demons think twice.

■ **THAT'S MAGIC!** There'll be plenty to marvel at between scenes in DMC2.

DEVIL MAY CRY 2

Dante's back for some kick-ass action.

SO WHAT DOES THE GAME LOOK LIKE? Two missions were playable in the latest build we've received. The first showed off interior environments including one room containing a gigantic clockwork-like mechanism; a second took Dante through a town's streets, canals, courtyards and across building rooftops. Brick for brick, the detail was impeccable. The surreal colour tones and speeding clouds in the sky lent the game an ominous, otherworldly feel.

WILL THE GAMEPLAY LIVE UP TO EXPECTATIONS?

Most definitely! The controls are the same as before. But when surrounded, pistols track foes automatically and Dante nonchalantly shoots in opposite directions (coolly over the shoulder, if something's behind) until nothing's left standing – John Woo eat your heart out! Animation is smoother, evident in the more pronounced gun recoil while perforating undesirables with lead, not to mention Hong Kong action movie-style backflips and cartwheels to evade attacks. Sure, we were expecting to be able to run up walls and do a mid-air flip while squeezing off a few rounds, but jaws dropped when Dante dived down towards the enemy with double guns blazing. Sweet.

YOU STILL GET TO BUMP OFF DEMONS, RIGHT?

You'd better believe it. Goat-headed Satanic statues came to life, unfurling giant bat wings, and hawks

'de-cloaked', appearing rather eerily out of nowhere. Most abundant at this stage, though, were the lumbering skeletal forms who were carrying twin maces, swords or axes – the most powerful of these was throwing blade-edged shields at us like a yo-yo. While they were dispatched relatively easily, an imposing steel and leather-armoured boss posed a new challenge. A pair of spiked spheres were continuously hurled at Dante or spun on chains to deflect bullets. And you can expect even meaner foes when the game finally arrives. □ AW

opinion

PlayStation 2

DEVIL MAY CRY 2 still has its plot under wraps, but the acrobatic, bullet ballet action alone is exhilarating. If it delivers all the enhanced features promised, this baby has 'Hit' stamped all over it.

WHAT WE WANT

■ A white-knuckle action adventure to Hell and back that oozes even more style and substance.

WHAT YOU WANT

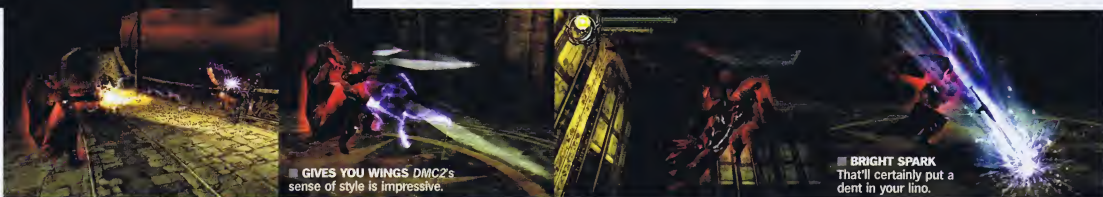
■ Kirakira on the forums wants a 60Hz mode this time, for the smoothest action possible.

WHAT THEY WANT

■ To show rivals in the 'stylish dark hero shooter' genre exactly who's the boss.

HOT OR NOT?

FRIGID ☐ TEPID ☐ WARM ☐ HOT ☐ BOILING ☐ MELTDOWN ☐



■ **BRIGHT SPARK** That'll certainly put a dent in your lino.

monitor

HANDS-ON



RIGID RACCOON?

Parodying Metal Gear Solid's codec, Sly Cooper communicates with his nerdy mate Bentley as you progress through the levels. The bespectacled turtle provides clues and help in learning the game's controls. It's smart design and a cute little homage to another great sneaker, Solid Snake.

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

90%

TO SCALE Sly actually looks the right size next to other animals and characters



■ **VISUAL VAVOOM!**
With cel-shaded graphics this good, it's like a playable cartoon.

SLY COOPER AND THE THEVIOUS RACCOONUS

With Sly stylin', are we facing a platform game renaissance?

WHAT'S SLY'S STORY? The ridiculously titled *Thevius Raccoonus* is an ancient guidebook on how to flog stuff. Passed from one generation of thieving raccoons to the next, it is lovingly cherished by Sly's forefathers until ironically it gets pinched from the master thief themselves. Five criminals who murdered Sly's father and stole the book have torn it up into sections and scattered it. Now the teenage raccoon wants vengeance and his family's heirloom back.

WHAT'S A RACCOON TO DO? Players don Sly's balaclava and each multi-tiered level sees the hero attempting to swipe a bit of the *Thevius Raccoonus* back from a different villain. Foxy cop Camellita is always on Sly's tail, but usually has to settle for nabbing Sly's target instead. Mr. Cooper is a nimble character. He's able to leap into the air, use his cane to swing from hooks, climb ladders and poles, and smash objects to reveal hidden goodies. In certain locations he can also perform sneaky moves like creeping along a narrow ledge or hiding behind an object. And collecting clues earns even more powerful special moves, which proves to be an enticing incentive for fully exploring the levels. Abilities include slow motion, dive attack and decoy. The levels offer a smart mix of battling goons, collecting items, exploring, puzzles and trying to sneak around undetected. Entertaining boss battles and the chance to pilot vehicles and fire cannons provide even more welcome variety.

IS SLY CAMERA SHY? The only annoyances at this stage seem to be a camera that doesn't always provide the best view of the action and an over-reliance on pixel-perfect jumping, which could cause frustration. Overall the difficulty level is set reasonably low to accommodate younger players, but having to negotiate a tricky set of jumps over and over again is an old-school platformer trick to extend a game's length that should have been left behind in the last century.

Sly Cooper is turning out to be a stylish adventure that should prove an excellent addition to the PS2's expanding line-up of quality platformers for gamers of all ages. Unless developers SuckerPunch mess things up royally in the next few weeks, *OPS2* expect this will receive a glowing review next issue. □ JH

opinion PlayStation 2

SLY COOPER AND THE THEVIOUS RACCOONUS

looks set to join the growing list of quality platform games that have recently appeared on PS2. Aside from a camera angle issue, there's little between SuckerPunch and a real winner.

WHAT WE WANT

■ A platformer that is as entertaining to play it as Sly is visually stylish.

WHAT YOU WANT

■ Many American players have complained of the game's short length. You want more right?

WHAT THEY WANT

■ To sneak past Ratchet and Clank and Jak and Daxter and claim the mantle as best platformer.

HOT OR NOT?

FRIGID

TEPID

WARM

HOT

BOILING

MELTDOWN

CARTOON COMPATIBLE

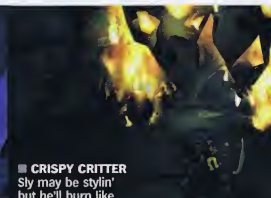
While it may seem that every developer is trying to get on the cel-shaded bandwagon (see our feature this issue), there's no doubt *Sly Cooper* is visually stunning. The cut-scenes are funky and striking, and the whole game is slick while never forgetting to bring along a sense of humour. Using a pastiche of comic book style and film noir, the game oozes quality. Some games have proven more conducive to supporting a cel-shaded look than others, and Sly Cooper has the character to pull it off.



■ **HEY CHUM** Raccoons are evidently a delicacy.



■ **ALL SEASONS** The obligatory snow level?



■ **CRISPY CRITTER**
Sly may be stylin' but he'll burn like anyone else.



■ **RIGHT ANGLES**
Not a tile-based area in sight... Good stuff.



NAME: SOCOM: US Navy SEALs
PUBLISHER: SCE
DEVELOPER: Zipper Interactive
WEBSITE: www.scea.com/games/
SCUS-97134.as
RELEASE: TBA 2003

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 75%

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALs

Voice communication comes of age on PlayStation 2.

WHAT'S THAT YOU'RE WEARING ON YOUR HEAD?

Yeah, it does look a little daft but this gizmo's a great new addition to PS2 gaming. Our US cousins are already using the USB headset - which plugs into the PS2 - to control games and communicate with each other via the Internet. Hopefully, we'll be doing the same by spring of next year. It will come packaged with military shooter *SOCOM: US Navy SEALs* and, quite frankly, it's a revelation.

SO YOU MEAN I CAN USE THIS TO PLAY GAMES?

That's right. Take *SOCOM's* One-player mode, for example. Just hold down and bark commands through the microphone at your AI team-mates, and they'll do exactly as they're told (see *It's Good To Talk*). Admittedly, there's a set structure to your orders (you can't just shout "Oi mate, let's go kick some terrorist butt!") but as long as you stick to the rules in the manual, it works brilliantly. No more fiddling around with complicated menus in the heat of battle, just speak and it shall be done. Genius.

YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT TALKING ONLINE...

Oh yes, and it's not just an opportunity to insult people either. During multiplayer network games, holding down opens the radio channel: you'll hear a beep, then you'll have ten seconds to speak to your international comrades. For the greatest effect, stick to short statements or questions, such as "Tango Down!" when you eliminate an enemy or "I'm going in, who's covering?" when you need some back-up for a charge forward. It's a brilliant aid to teamwork and adds a cool new dimension to gaming. Roll on Broadband Adaptor. AL

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

Some will say that online gamers will suffer socially from not playing in the same room, as you do with split-screen play. True enough, but with the aid of your trusty headset, a good ribbing is never far away.



DEAD MAN WATCHING If you die during online missions it's still possible to watch the actions through your team-mates' eyes.



EYES & EARS The chatter through your headset is backed up by on-screen text. Pay attention, as death by friendly fire's a real possibility.

STRANGE

YOU WERE KILLED BY SWIMMING WITH BASES
Use the directional buttons to cycle through teammates.
Press the R2 button to select weapons for the next round.
IN ZHYNIE

J Wank / Jagger Sgt. Kill with AK-47
Sgt. Kill MAN DOWN

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION Use your headset to listen in to vital info on enemy positions. If you don't, chances are you'll be eating dirt pretty soon. Single shots can put you out of the game.

ZOOM 2.5x

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

Commanding your team in **SOCOM** is easy if you follow a few simple rules. Here are a few examples.

Team orders must always be constructed from 'who, where and what' elements. Your team is split into two groups – your sidekick (known as Able) and Bravo (the two other squad members). That's the 'who' part of the order. The 'where' refers to waypoints on the map, or an area you point your crosshairs at, while the 'what' is the task you want them to perform.



If you want your sidekick to chuck a grenade, hold **△** and say: "Able, deploy grenade." Easy.



To get Bravo to open a door for you, just say "Bravo, open door." Then you can lob a grenade in.



To get Bravo to escort a hostage to an extraction point, first say "Bravo, escort," then "Bravo, run to Romeo" for whatever the waypoint's designation.



4. If you need Able to operate a lever, just say "Able, flip switch."



GIVE US A GO
Find yourself a game with less than 16 players, pick a side – and away you go.

opinion

PlayStation 2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE AND SPOTLIGHT

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALs is a great blast made better by voice communication features. This opens up all manner of new opportunities for strategy. It's going to set PS2 gaming alight next year.

WHAT WE WANT

- The entire European PS2 population playing online as one big trigger-happy family.

WHAT YOU WANT

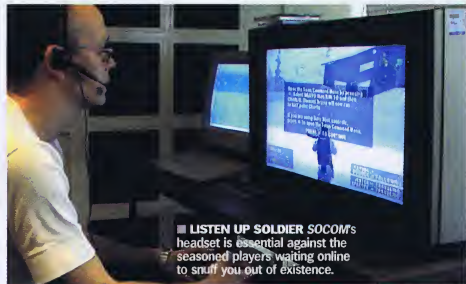
- Shadowguy on the forums has expressed a desire for Sony to ensure there's no online cheating.

WHAT THEY WANT

- To give PS2 owners the ability to challenge gamers all over the world. Game on!

HOT OR NOT?

FRIGID TEPID WARM HOT BOILING MELTDOWN



LISTEN UP SOLDIER SOCOM's headset is essential against the seasoned players waiting online to snuff you out of existence.

monitor

NEW SCREENS

NAME Def Jam Vendetta

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER AKI Corp/ EA Canada

WEB SITE www.ea.com/eaesports/bg/

RELEASED March 2003

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE 75%

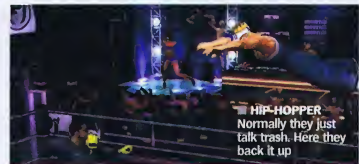
DEF JAM VENDETTA

Def Jam set to go the slam!

A HIP-HOP WRESTLING GAME? Yeah, and why not? Right now, THQ have exclusive rights to the WWE license, meaning that anyone else doing a wrestling game is going to have to come up with something new, or go the way of Acclaim and do something like the *Legends of Wrestling*. EA have chosen a completely different way of approaching the situation by using hip hop artists as the stars of an underground fighting racket, teaming up with AKI, who are noted for their excellent work with the WWF titles back on the N64.

SO IT'S THE STANDARD DEAL WITH HIP-HOP HEAVIES
INSTEAD? Apparently not. In addition to the stock standard health meter, a 'Momentum' meter is being included, which works something like a special meter in a fighting game, except that it's governed by crowd response, which is in turn affected by the character's charisma and the moves they're pulling off. Get the crowd going nuts, and you'll be able to perform a 'Blazin' move, which will see your opponent do their best rag doll impersonation as you slap them stupid. There's a story mode complete with a crime boss whose made off with your ex, 45 characters – 12 being Def Jam artists who serve as boss opponents (including Method Man, Redman, Ludacris, DMX and more), and a whole bunch of intrigue outside of the ring. So it sounds like the soap opera element of the WWE will still be there, even though the licence isn't.

ANY OTHER REASON TO BE EXCITED? The primary reason OPS2 got excited about this one is how the game looks running. Most wrestling games have that slow, clumsy look about them, but Def Jam Vendetta looks to have all the high velocity action that an actual wrestling match does. It's all a bit over the top, but OPS2 would rather see a fast-paced game with smooth animation that looked unrealistic than another slow game based on an official wrestling license. Variety is always nice. Hopefully the footage we've seen is representative of how most of the action looks, rather than just bits of it. If so, we're in for something special come March or so. **□ DT**



opinion

PlayStation 2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE AND SPOTLIGHT

DEF JAM VENDETTA may seem like an odd marriage between wrestling and hip-hop, but so long as the bone-crunching moves are there to entertain, OPS2 won't care. Lookin' good.

WHAT WE WANT

- For the game to play as good as it currently looks based on the footage we've seen.

WHAT YOU WANT

- Not a word from gamers on the Aussie forums. Come on folks, this looks sweet!

WHAT THEY WANT

- For people to take a non-WWE wrestling game with hip-hop artists as fighters seriously.

HOT OR NOT?

FRIGID TEPID WARM HOT BOILING MELTDOWN

Only you can bring
Light to Darkness



In evil shadow has fallen across the universe. As Sora, you must wield the power of the Keyblade to defeat the evil Heartless, featuring over a hundred Disney characters, as well as cameo appearances from the stars of final fantasy. KINGDOM HEARTS unites two of the biggest names in gaming in a single epic adventure. Courage is the Key.



monitor

HANDS-ON

METAL GEAR SOLID 2

NAME Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance
PUBLISHER Konami
DEVELOPER Konami JPN
WEB SITE www.konamijpn.com/products/mgs2_sub/english/index.html
RELEASE February/March 2003

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE **75%**



RUMOUR HAS IT

Some of the missions in Substance are actually played from a first-person perspective, as Konami planning a Metal Gear-themed FPS? Probably not, but if one shows up, remember you heard it here first.

HE'S BEHIND YOU
More Snake, more sneak. More everything Metal Gear – you know you want it.

STEALTH TACTICS
Eliminate All missions require you to dispatch every enemy without being seen.

SLASH!
Raiden's sword was underused in MGS2, but it comes in handy here.

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

We test the reality of Snake's VR Missions.

WHAT ARE VR MISSIONS?

These 'Virtual Reality' Missions are training simulations. As such, they're small, self-contained and often timed. This is pure MGS action, never interrupted by long cut-scenes filled with bizarre plot twists and ponderous dialogue. They look different, too, with lots of Tron-like glowing walls and almost cel-shaded character models.

HOW ARE THEY SHAPING UP? Judging by the first five missions we played (several times over, in fact) they're awesome. Stage 1 had us sneaking Solid Snake through a typical room filled with guards, while Stage 2 allowed 90 seconds to bullseye 12 targets. In Stage 3, Raiden had to dispatch four guards without being seen by guard or camera. Stage 4 found us using Raiden's HF Blade to eliminate 30 targets in 90 seconds. Finally, Stage 5 (our favourite) gave us a vague sense of MGS déjà vu – Meryl was lying wounded, and we had almost infinite sniper rounds (both regular and tranquillising) and a fistful of Pentazamin to keep a horde of 30 enemies away from her for three minutes.

A WORTHY COMPANION TO MGS2, THEN? Absolutely. While no VR Mission takes very long to beat, you can

always try to finish a few seconds faster, or inflict fewer casualties. Plus, their sheer volume (over 200) will keep you occupied for quite a while. Moreover, for those few poor, unenlightened souls who haven't played Metal Gear Solid 2 yet, the original game is bundled with Substance, garnished with 'Snake Tales' and over a hundred alternate reality missions (like the now well-known skateboarding challenge). If you were hooked on MGS2, you're going to need this. ☐ EB

opinion PlayStation 2

MGS2: SUBSTANCE, just like the *Special Missions* on PSone, gives the full game an extended life. The VR Missions are just one great aspect of a package that looks to be pure Metal Gear, pure action and pure fun.

WHAT WE WANT	WHAT YOU WANT	WHAT THEY WANT
■ Tonnes more Snake action and the occasional quirk	■ Many forum members are calling for a PS2 remake of the original MGS	■ Konami wants an end to the griping that MGS2 was an interactive movie rather than a game
■ How about a playable Meryl?	■ Don't expect it here	

HOT OR NOT?

FRIGID ☐ TEPID ☐ WARM ☐ HOT ☐ BOILING ☐ MELTDOWN ☐

THE DOCUMENT OF METAL GEAR SOLID 2 DVD

The contents of the US-only interactive making of documentary DVD revealed.

Aside from giving us a brief taste of VR training this peculiar release is packed with typical DVD-style bonus features. You can view development sketches and 3D models of the characters and environments, listen to background music, read descriptions of the various pieces of the game engine, view the game's promotional videos, read the script and blogs of the development staff and check out magazine covers, toys and other artwork. You can even examine Kojima's actual design drawings (if you can read Japanese, that is).

*Sadly, The Document Of Metal Gear Solid DVD will never be released in Australia. Import freaks only.



View Original Game Plan & Instruction Sheets by Kojima (in Japanese only)

AIM, FIRE! This level is a virtual shooting gallery of genome soldiers. You must protect the lovely Meryl, if you can!



NAME Battle Engine Aquila
PUBLISHER Infogrames
DEVELOPER Lost Toys
WEB SITE www.infogrames.com
RELEASE January 2003

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE 75%



WAR AIN'T PRETTY
Well, except when it looks like this...

CLEAN CUT-SCENES
Each mission comes with its own cut-scene leading into it that boasts extremely clean. At least they help convey the sensation of being in a futuristic war scenario, and add some story and character.

CLEAR AS DAY-GLO
Important units and buildings are clearly marked to avoid insanity



IN YER FACE
It's more than possible to get up close and personal



GRUNTY No unit is too big or small to avoid inclusion in BEA

BATTLE ENGINE AQUILA

Will gamers around the globe warm to this futuristic combat sim?

WHAT CAN WE MECH OF ALL THIS? This is a tale of war, boys and girls. War between the Forseti and the Muspell (both being names ripped straight out of Norse mythology), who are battling over the last scraps of land in a world where global warming has done its job and melted the polar caps. This sets the scene for a mission based flight/mech-sim that seems vaguely reminiscent of the classic Colony Wars series on PSone. The player takes on the role of Hawk Winter, a dockworker whose piloting skills with the mechanised loaders make him the prime candidate to pilot the Battle Engine Aquila. All the other prospective pilots were blown to kingdom come in an act of sabotage by the top gun of the bunch.

DOES THE DUAL NATURE OF THE BATTLE ENGINE'S ROLE MAKE THINGS CONFUSING?

The answer is "No". On land, the spider-like Battle Engine Aquila controls much like your average first person shooter, with the left analogue stick handling movement, and the right stick being used to look around. A quick press of the @ button and the four legs of Aquila fold up and turn the craft into a jet. Different weapons are available depending on which mode Aquila is in, but these are cycled and fired with the shoulder buttons in both modes. This gives us a combat vehicle that seamlessly moves from one battlefield role to the next. Superb. The heads up display also remains the same regardless which mode the Aquila is in. It's invaluable too with so many units, both friend and foe on the battlefield.

HOW IS IT SIMILAR TO COLONY WARS? The thing that makes Battle Engine Aquila remind OPS2 of Colony Wars is the branching mission structure which gives the player alternate missions to take on

In the event that they earn a high enough rating in the previous mission. The objectives are the standard military vehicle sim, such as defending bases, escorting vulnerable allied units, seek and destroy runs and the like. Completing all the primary and secondary objectives in any one given mission seems quite tough in the build we received, which should help to make playing through all the alternate missions a great long term goal. We certainly didn't have time to play through the forty-three missions before deadline, things got tough within the first five or six as it was! The combination of the branching mission paths, plus the vast amounts of units in each scenario convey the sensation that you're in a war, rather than just a series of scraps. Solid visuals with lots of neat effects, intuitive controls and a tonne of things to unlock and earn make Battle Engine Aquila an extremely promising post-Christmas title. □ DT

opinion PlayStation 2

BATTLE ENGINE AQUILA is already looking like a polished and engrossing sci-fi shooter that's deep enough to be bordering on being a simulation. Hopefully we'll have a review next issue.

WHAT WE WANT	WHAT YOU WANT	WHAT THEY WANT
■ A more gradual learning curve for this decidedly tough game.	■ Who knows? No one's mentioned it on the forums. A shame, this one warrants a look.	■ To capitalise on the relative lack of mission based flight/combat sims for PS2.

HOT OR NOT?					
FRIGID	TEPID	WARM	HOT	BOILING	MELTDOWN



PlayStation²

grand theft auto

vice city



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monitor

60 MINUTES WITH

SILENT HILL 3

NAME Silent Hill 3
PUBLISHER Konami
DEVELOPER Konami TYO
WEB SITE www.konamityo.com/sh3
RELEASE 2003 [TBA]

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE **65%**

■ ALONE IN THE PARK
Heather regrets getting off the Nightride bus one stop early.

■ JOY RIDE?
Fairgrounds are freaky at the best of times...

■ OFF THE RAILS You don't want know what did this.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

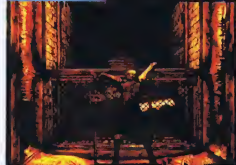
Heather is just an ordinary young girl living in an ordinary town, far from Silent Hill. When she goes shopping during a day off, she's suddenly transported to a world of monsters and danger. Why has this happened to her? It's your job to find out.

SILENT HILL 3

Alone in the dark, surrounded by grotesque creatures. Be afraid.

■ ONE STEP AT A TIME Creepy hallways and spooky light effects abound.

■ TOY STORY? Unfortunately, this is likely to be the cutest thing in Silent Hill 3.



■ GORE BLIMEY Changing Rooms don't get it quite right yet again.

00.00 Disorientated and clutching a knife, Heather enters the Lakeside Funpark. There's nothing fun about this dark and grimy place, as we guide her past dead pink bunny mascots. Goosebumps hitting already, quickly switch the blade for a pistol.

05.15 Exploring the area, we discover metal cages containing cadavers. Charming. There's a door on the far wall. Take a deep breath and enter – radio static hits as soon as we're inside. Inch forward, then freeze in our tracks: In the distance, a dog-like creature spots us and charges. Try to escape, but the shifting camera makes our head spin. It manages to get in a good bite, but a few gunshots puts it down.

15.45 In the darkness with a wimpy flashlight and no map, we lose our bearings. We try the doors lining the wall. Only one opens – into a gift shop full of useless souvenirs. Help!

28.00 Turns out we missed a door. Heading towards the rollercoaster, something red, wet and dead is hanging from a lamppost. Scream as another dog suddenly pounces, followed by a gigantic fleshy creature with massive arms. Run around madly shooting. It goes down. Stuff this, time to switch to the machine gun!

45.30 At a rollercoaster ride we're chased up the stairs by something spidery. Creep back down and kill one. Another is in the midst of an attack spasm, appendages flailing. It sounds horrible. Make it stop!

60.00 Nerves completely shattered, FMV takes over while we're walking down the rollercoaster track. Blinding light cuts through the darkness and a carriage screams towards Heather, knocking her off into the darkness below. **AW**

opinion PlayStation 2

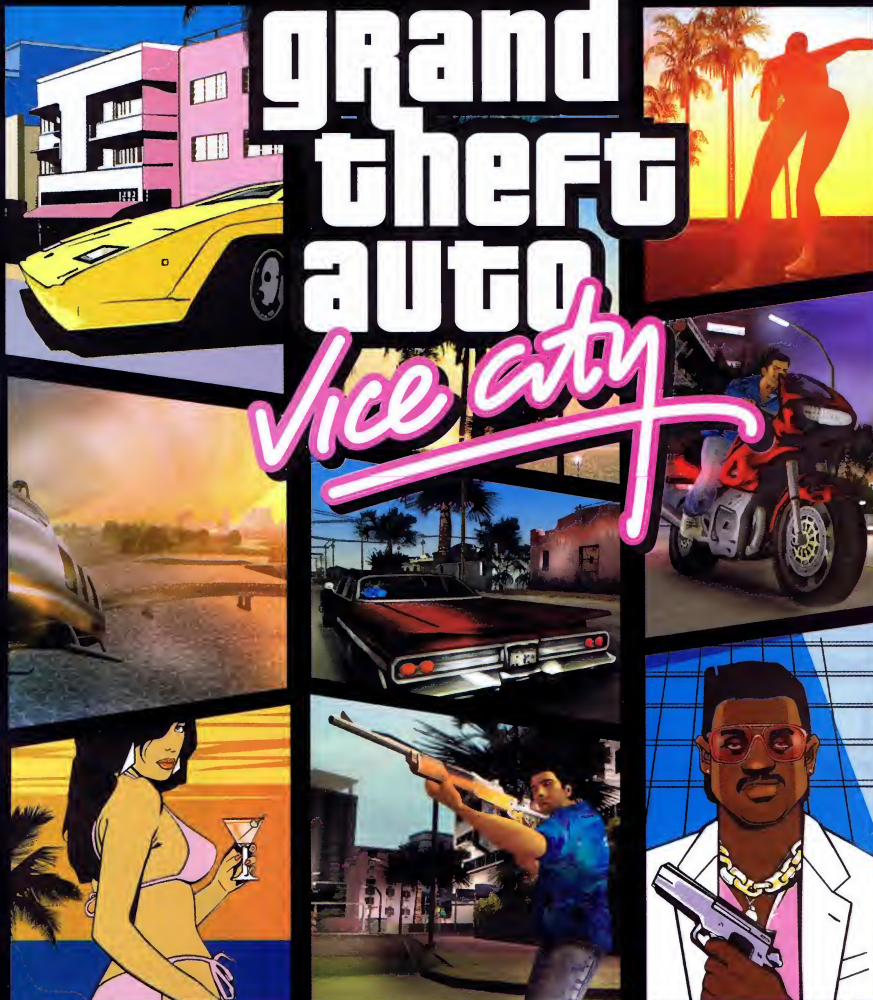
SILENT HILL 3 ups the combat quotient with automatic weapons and more nightmarish creatures (not to mention foreboding atmosphere) than before, without resorting to a complete Resi-style makeover.

WHAT WE WANT	WHAT YOU WANT	WHAT THEY WANT
■ To be needy of psychotherapy upon completion. A bonus comedy ending like SH2 would be cool.	■ Forum goer Biggs&Wedge wants a 'making of' DVD, and a bonus pair of clean underwear.	■ To take the PS2 horror throne vacated by Resident Evil's console deflection.
HOT OR NOT?		
FRIGID	TEPID	WARM
		HOT
		BOILING
		MELTDOWN

PlayStation²

Grand Theft Auto

Vice City



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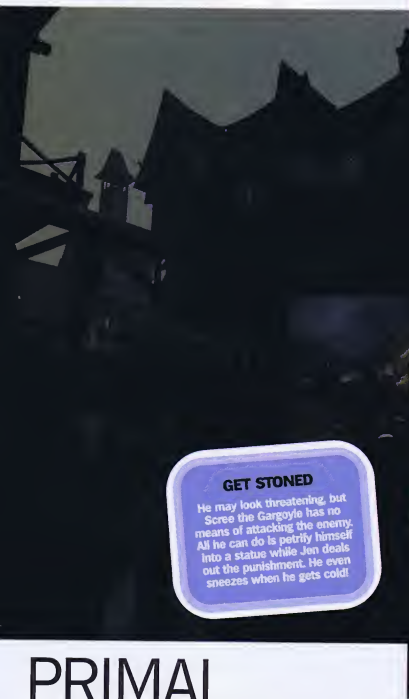
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monitor

NEW SCREENS

NAME *Primal*
PUBLISHER SCE
DEVELOPER Studio Cambridge
WEB SITE www.primalgame.com
RELEASE March 2003

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE **75%**



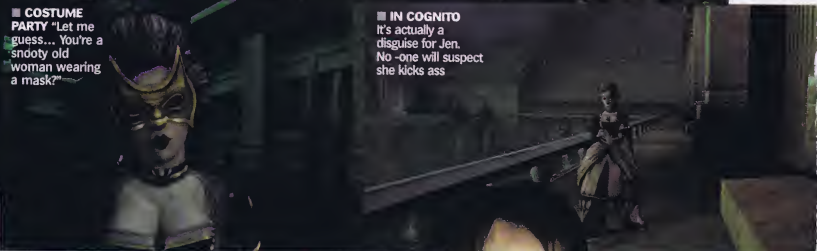
IMMOVABLE OBJECT Scree turns to stone to avoid damage, and insults.

GET STONED

He may look threatening, but Scree the Gargoyle has no means of attacking the enemy. All he can do is petrify himself into a statue while Jen deals out the punishment. He even sneezes when he gets cold!

COSTUME PARTY "Let me guess... You're a snooty old woman wearing a mask!"

IN COGNITO It's actually a disguise for Jen. No-one will suspect she kicks ass



PRIMAL

Studio Cambridge get serious with their PS2 debut.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT? *Primal* sees you take on the role of the Buffy-esque Jen, who has to traverse through four different realms in search of her lost boyfriend. The developers have put the emphasis on creating a sense of realism; you won't find any floating pickups, intrusive status displays or repetitive enemy movement patterns here. Accompanying you on your quest is your sidekick gargoyle, Scree. The player can switch control between the two characters at any time with a press of the button.

WHY THE NEED FOR TWO MAIN CHARACTERS?

In order to give the game a puzzle element, Jen and Scree have different abilities that may be used to compliment each other in order to overcome certain obstacles. For example, at one stage of the game there is a tower with a locked door. Rather than search around for a key you can use Scree to climb up the side of the tower and let down a rope from the top for Jen to ascend. While this style of gameplay requires you to think more laterally, it is highly context sensitive, meaning that you may have just climbed that wall but that doesn't necessarily mean you can climb the next one.

WHAT IS THE COMBAT SYSTEM LIKE? Combat consists of locking-on to one enemy at a time and pummeling them with a combo of attacks using the four shoulder buttons. Apparently Studio Cambridge are attempting to incorporate the intricacies of a standard one on one fighting game, such as Tekken, but at the moment it seems like another case of locking-on and mashing

away until the unlucky demon is dead. At least you can vary your attacks so that you are not doing the same three hit combo over and again.

HOW GOOD DOES IT LOOK? The appearance of each realm is suitably ethereal, although in the early version of the game *OPS2* played a lot of the environments were all too similar for our liking. There was also a definite graphical sparseness with only a few lighting and heat effects to bring life into the worlds, but the two main characters were highly detailed and nicely animated. *OPS2* will bring you more details soon. ☐ **TO**

opinion PlayStation 2

PRIMAL promises to be a dark, surreal adventure with a real sense of scale to its environments. What we saw was quite early, and we expect the final version will be a bit deeper, or else *Primal* is in danger of seeming a bit too primitive.

WHAT WE WANT	WHAT YOU WANT	WHAT THEY WANT
A camera that actually focuses on the action and doesn't wander when you get into a scrap.	Shadowguyver on the forums is happy about the inclusion of progressive scan. High end AV bliss.	A fantasy game with an expansive, immersive world full of engaging, believable characters.

HOT OR NOT?

FRIGID ☐ TEPID ☐ WARM ☐ HOT ☐ BOILING ☐ MELTDOWN ☐





■ **ON YER BIKE!**
It may not be Vice City, but you do get to fire a gun while riding a bike.

monitor

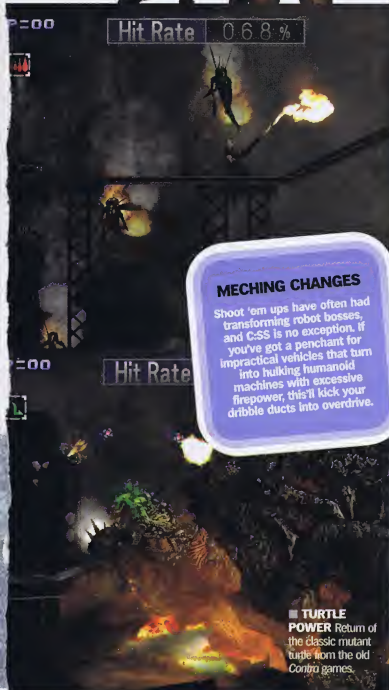
NEW SCREENS



NAME *Contra: Shattered Soldier*
PUBLISHER Konami
DEVELOPER Konami
WEB SITE NA
RELEASE January 2003

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

90%



MECHING CHANGES

Shoot 'em ups have often had transforming robot bosses, and CSS is no exception, if you've got a penchant for impractical vehicles that turn into hulking humanoid machines with excessive firepower, this'll kick your dribble ducts into overdrive.

■ **TURTLE POWER**
Return of the classic mutant turtle from the old Contra games.

CONTRA CRISPS?
Just when you thought video game marketing was as ludicrous as it could get...



CONTRA: SHATTERED SOLDIER

The resurrected shooter that proves old school is still cool.

CONTRA WHO? You'd be forgiven for not knowing anything about this side scrolling shooter if you weren't gaming back in the '80s and '90s, but *Contra* is one of the all time classics. What the 2D shoot 'em up lacked in depth, it more than made up for in style until it came to PSone, where *Contra: Legacy of War* and *The Contra Adventure* totally dragged its good name through the mud. Fortunately Konami appear to have made amends, because our hands-on with *Contra: Shattered Soldier* has revealed that the classic 2D gameplay has been resurrected and dressed up in contemporary 3D visual splendour.

WHAT MAKES UP A MODERN DAY CONTRA GAME?

While still essentially a 2D side scrolling shooter, everything you see is made up of superbly animated 3D models. In fact the only thing about the game that makes it 2D is the fact that the viewpoint is fixed to one side of the character throughout each area. To ensure *Shattered Soldier* isn't so retro as to be a simple point and shoot affair, Konami have handed the player three basic weapons from the start, each with their own charge-up attack. By holding **□** the player can lock the direction they're firing in, while **△** makes our gun-toting protagonist stand his ground, so he can fire in any direction without having to move. Where the average "Fill the screen full of bullets" shooter which relies on chronically difficult dodging scenarios to provide the intensity, *Contra* does takes a much more interesting approach by seamlessly going from one action scenario to another. Whether it's skilling down a mountainside, riding a rocket, cruising on a hover-bike, or simply hoofing it, a totally new situation is only ever a minute away.

WILL CONTRA GO THE DISTANCE? The question is, will you? This is a brutally hard game, going right back to the old school scenario where one hit from a stray bullet means instant death. Even though the game can be played through in about an hour, getting to the point where you can actually get through it will take countless hours of practise and memorising attack patterns.

If anything, the unforgiving nature of this game will put off many gamers who are accustomed to being able to take a few hits on the chin, and a gradual learning curve. This one has been made with gaming veterans in mind. The OPS2 crew will be growing blisters (and working on their repertoire of expletives) until next issue, where short of the game slipping, we'll have a full review of *Contra*. □ DT

opinion PlayStation 2

CONTRA: SHATTERED SOLDIER may seem a strangely outdated, limited kind of game to the masses of new-school gamers about. However, anyone who reminisces about the good old days when games were a serious challenge won't want to miss this.

WHAT WE WANT

■ An easier difficulty level so we can convince casual gamers that this is actually fun.

WHAT YOU WANT

■ Mekah, 7113 from the forums wants it this year. Bad news, but you haven't got long to wait now!

WHAT THEY WANT

■ Everyone who ever played games in the '80s to get nostalgic and spend up.

HOT OR NOT?

FRIGID ☐ TEPID ☐ WARM ☐ HOT ☒ BOILING ☐ MELTDOWN ☐

SHOOTING GALLERY

With six types of attack available in *Shattered Soldier*, the violence isn't so mindless.



HEAVY MACHINEGUN

The stock standard firearm. Sends a stream of bullets in a straight line. Perfect for mowing down folks in a straight line.

FIRE WHIP

Flame on! What it lacks in range, it makes up for in damage dealt, and in awesome fiery death animations. Crispy!

DIVER MINE

This explosive launcher fires lumps of death that sink along the ground after a short arc through the air.

ROUND SWEEP

Launches a spinning globe ahead, which sprays a wave of bullets in all directions once it comes to a stop.

ENERGY SHOT

A charged attack that does more damage in a single-shot than any other weapon at the player's disposal.

HOMING MISSILES

Launches a spread of guided missiles that direct themselves towards targets all on their own.



NAME Sword of the Samurai
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER Lightweight
WEB SITE www.ubisoft.com
RELEASE January 2003

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE **75%**



■ GANGLAND Multiple opponents are the order of the day in Time Attack mode.

■ SPLITTING HAIRS Call it what you like, this is gonna hurt.



■ CLEFT CHIN A Gillette ad in the making?



■ NO TRICKS Nothing up his sleeves at any rate...

SWORD OF THE SAMURAI

The quest to find the ultimate swordfighting simulation continues.

HAVEN'T WE SEEN THIS SOMEWHERE BEFORE?

If you're thinking, "That looks a lot like Kengo," then you'd be right. This is actually *Kengo II* with a name that makes no reference to its predecessor. This could possibly be due to the fact so many people disliked the introduction of the life gauge that *Kengo* brought to what is essentially the *Bushido Blade* series from PSone. If you hated the life bars, we have bad news...

HAS THE COMBAT CHANGED MUCH?

To be honest, no. Once again you'll be spending time developing your character to fill out their array of stances and techniques. Prior to that the player can only perform a couple of simple combos, blocks and guard breaks. The combat engine is more about judging distances and precise timing rather than performing tricky combos. In short, you have to put the time in to get something out of this game, if things remain the way they are, button mashes will hate this.

SO WHAT'S ACTUALLY NEW THEN?

For starters there are a lot more characters and opponents to come across. Female character models are now available, so those who tired of gawking at the male form exclusively can give a yelp of joy. There are also a tonne of new environments, most of which need to be unlocked in the *Bushido Quest* mode. Incidentally, there are a lot more stances to learn and a ton of techniques (attacks, etc) within each. The player can prepare nine custom forms and choose to assign themselves three at any given time. Thus the player can develop a variety of forms, and assign themselves the ones they need to overcome a certain opponent. Handy.

■ EQUAL OPPORTUNITY Yep, even the girls can get cut to ribbons.



ANYTHING ELSE? The *Bushido Quest* mode also promises to have areas where the player can run around and take on multiple opponents at once, although *OPS2* hope these sections are more entertaining than the new Time Attack mode, which simply involved running down a road and hacking up an entourage of bland swordsmen.

It's something similar to the 100-man challenge from *Bushido Blade* back on the PSone. For all these beefs *OPS2* have with our initial impressions, there does seem to be a lot more to the *Bushido Quest* mode than the single player game in *Kengo* ever had. Better still, the means of improving your characters stats no longer involves doing mini-games over and over, but rather, simply practising against other opponents, entering tournaments, and learning on the job. Much more fun. **□ DT**

opinion PlayStation 2

SWORD OF THE SAMURAI may be looking a tad too similar to the rather disappointing *Kengo*, but the extra depth with the *Bushido Quest* mode may rescue it. We'll know soon enough, with a review on the cards in the next issue or two.

WHAT WE WANT	WHAT YOU WANT	WHAT THEY WANT
■ A way of learning new moves on their own other than getting attacked with them.	■ Not one mention of this on the forums. Did <i>Kengo</i> put you off folks?	■ To redeem themselves in the eyes of the <i>Bushido Blade</i> fans.
HOT OR NOT?		
FRIGID	TEPID	WARM
		HOT
		BOILING
		MELTDOWN



monitor

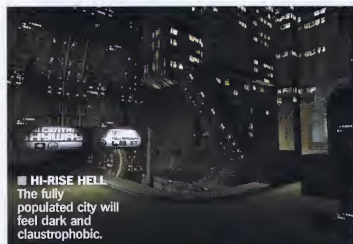
NEW SCREENS



NAME Judge Dredd Vs Judge Death
PUBLISHER Universal Interactive
DEVELOPER Rebellion
WEB SITE www.2000adonline.com
RELEASE Spring 2003

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

40%



■ **HI-RISE HELL** The fully populated city will feel dark and claustrophobic.



■ **JUDGE WISELY** Be careful who you kill or you'll be the one in trouble.

■ **DREDDY TO RUMBLE** Enjoy it while you can, lads, the Judge will see you soon.

JUDGE DREDD VS. JUDGE DEATH

We check out the big-booted lawman's stomping ground.

IS THIS JUST THE GAME OF THE FILM? Now, we know these screens look pretty realistic, but we wouldn't go that far. Judge Dredd is has been one of the biggest, baddest stars in comic book history since his first appearance in 1977. Part lawman, part military dictator, he carries a really big gun (the Lawgiver), sports yellow shoulderpads and dishes out harsh justice better than Stallone could ever dream of.

SO WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT THEN? These are the first screenshots of the warren-like cityscape of the comic books brought lovingly to life. We're hoping that all these areas will be open to exploration. We're told that the metropolis will contain a variety of different districts, from industrial to decrepit, but clearly the imposing size and sense of sheer vertical scale are a central motif. Think of the packed and dangerous streets seen in films like *Blade Runner* and you'll be on the right track. Imagine these environments buzzing with traffic and pedestrians, aircars flitting between buildings and potential perpetrators everywhere and you'll get some impression of what to expect as the game develops.

WHAT, NO CEL-SHADING? While taking Dredd straight from the colourful comic pages must have been a huge temptation, the developers are concentrating on bringing a grittier, grungier world to life. As you can

see, hordes of people and robots crowd overpopulated interiors, and all can be arrested for a variety of minor offences. The major story, though, revolves around Dredd's longtime adversary, Judge Death. And obviously being the most important characters, Rebellion is spending a long time on character design to get them spot on. Fans of the comic strip will also get to see most of the major players from the series make an appearance. We can only pray that you can also take the handlebars of the Lawmaster and trawl the city streets. □ MW

opinion PlayStation 2

JUDGE DREDD VS. JUDGE DEATH is still a way off but it looks like Rebellion is staying true to what made the comics so good. We'll keep you posted on its development, just to make sure.

WHAT WE WANT

■ A comic book game that has a bit of character. Not just another branded shooter.

WHAT YOU WANT

■ What do you want? There's nothing on the forums. Get typing and give us some feedback.

WHAT THEY WANT

■ For Dredd to bridge the gap between hardcore fans and gamers.

HOT OR NOT?

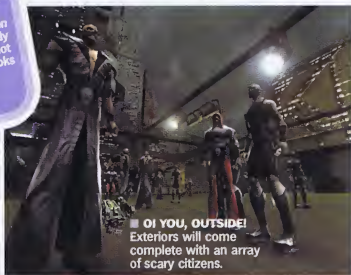
FRIGID TEPID WARM HOT BOILING MELTDOWN



■ **I AM THE LAW!** Dredd's comic book style should influence the game heavily.



■ **CITY HEIGHTS** Imposing vertical structures and washed-out tones define Mega City One.



■ **OI YOU, OUTSIDE!** Exteriors will come complete with an array of scary citizens.



■ **GRIME AND PUNISHMENT** It's up to you to clean up this town.

RATCHET BLOKE!

TED PRICE

Insomniac's fresh-faced President chats to us about Ratchet & Clank.

Ratchet & Clank boasts some pretty bizarre weapons. Where did all the ideas come from?

We got everybody who was interested together in a room and all started throwing out ideas. We ended up with about 60 different weapons and rejected all but 16.

Tell us about some of the ones you decided to drop.

There was the Shrink-O-Ray, which made the enemies tiny enough to step on, and the Gigant-O-Ray, which turned enemies into balloons that you could pop.

Character design is notoriously hard to get right. What would you say are the golden rules?

Well, you need a character that's versatile and you also need somebody who can portray emotions, which usually means a big head. Finally, you need a character that is aesthetically appealing to a worldwide audience – and that's probably the most difficult thing. We were fortunate to get it right first time with Ratchet because when we showed it to Sony, all three territories said they didn't want any changes. Actually, Japan suggested adding stripes and eyebrows which made a huge, positive difference.

"SHRINK-O-RAY MADE ENEMIES TINY ENOUGH TO STEP ON"

Ratchet & Clank seems to be gunning for both casual and hardcore gamers. Isn't that a tricky balancing act?

We weren't sure about combining weapons and lots of explosions with characters that were cartoony. So, to put ourselves at ease, we did a lot of focus tests – the surprising thing was the response of the older kids. We thought that the bright environments would turn them off, but they told us that they liked the more adult humour and they loved blowing the crap out of everything! That was heartening.

R&C is constantly compared to Jak and Daxter. How close is your relationship with Naughty Dog?

We have a technology-sharing agreement with Naughty Dog and [its co-founder] Jason Rubin called me when we were starting on R&C and said, "Hey Ted, are you guys interested in using some of the technology from our game?" We went over to Naughty Dog, checked out some of the techniques they used and took the code

for the background engine. Part of our agreement is that we give them back the improvements and additions we've made to that code in the hope that they can use it on their next game.

Isn't that an unusual relationship?

It's a fairly unique as there's no money involved. It's all about moving our genre forward and creating unique and separate experiences. The irony is that we actually named *Ratchet & Clank* before we knew what *Jak and Daxter* was going to be called, and when they came out with it I was just, like, "Nooooooo!"

What originally prompted your move into game development?

Starting up a games company was something I did almost on a whim, because I thought, "this is a great way to write off the purchase of video games." The scary thing was, we didn't know anything about making games. We only found out how difficult it was when we got going and almost failed miserably.

What's the worst thing about working in the games industry?

All of us get so caught up in the creation process that we end up burning ourselves out, working away too many hours and neglecting our families. It's still a lot of fun, so I can't really complain... as long as you have games that sell.

How's the beard coming along?

We don't have that much facial hair at Insomniac; everybody's fairly clean-shaven. We have a few goatees, but no full beards. □ TC

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: **Ted Price**
Job title: **President/CEO Insomniac Games**
Nationality: **American**
Date of birth: **05/07/68**

Gameography:
1996 **Disruptor** (PSone)
1998 **Spyro the Dragon** (PSone)

1999: **Spyro the Dragon 2: Gateway to Glimmer** (PSone)

2000 **Spyro the Dragon 3: Year of the Dragon** (PSone)

2002 **Ratchet & Clank** (PS2)

Hobbies:
Practising Kenpo Karate, playing piano and guitar, playing beach volleyball, wavesailing, playing video games every now and then...

Favourite director:
Ridley Scott

Favourite authors:
Alistair Reynolds, Terry Goodkind

Favourite bands:
Sevendust, From Zero

■ THE PRICE IS RIGHT
And Ted's certainly onto a winner with platformer *Ratchet & Clank*.



Black Boot 1

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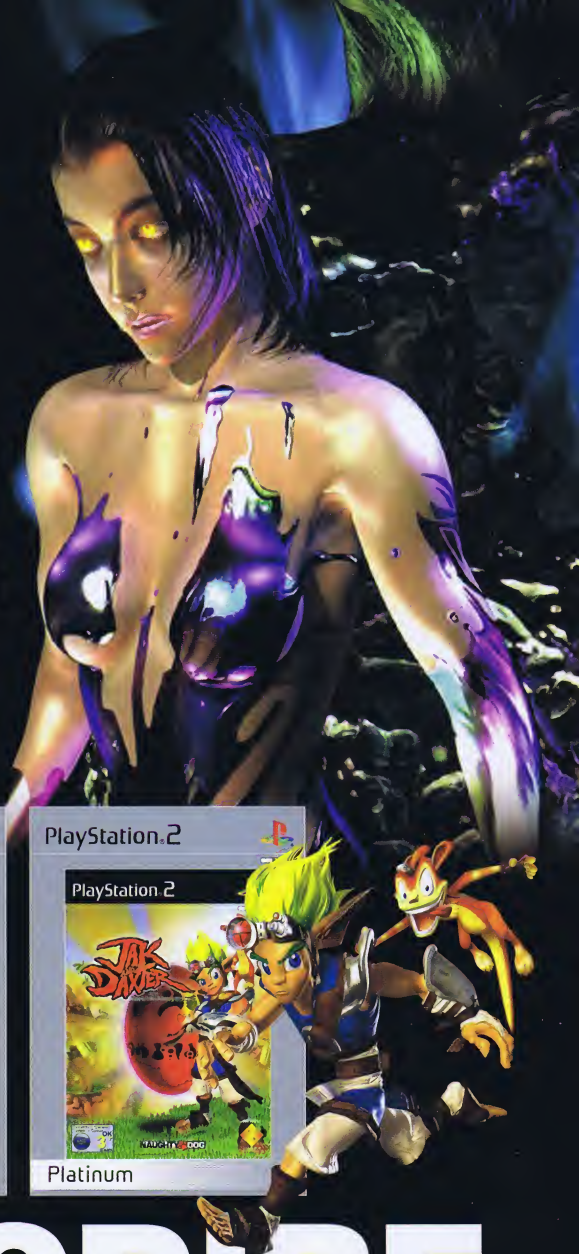
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THE HARD CEL

WORDS: DEAN EVANS, KEITH STUART. PAUL FITZPATRICK/ILLUSTRATION: DAVID S BLANCO

Cel-shading is the new buzz word in the games industry – the cool comic-book look that can be slapped onto everything from platform games to racers. So forget the quest for 3D perfection, light-bouncing polygons and motion-captured animation. Now is the time for 'toonery...



The games industry is never slow to pick up on a trend. If one successful game features lens flare or real-time weather, or (God help us) Bullet-Time, then suddenly the technique begin appearing everywhere, even in inappropriate scenarios. This year's fad is cel-shading, the instantly recognisable comic book look. But this technique may be more than a gimmick. While most games aspire to photorealism, cel-shading is anti-realistic. Uniquely, it's a style that relies less on technological chest-beating and more on artistic creativity.

Cel-shading can be defined as the deliberate use of a cartoon art style characterised by its bold colours, reduced detail and heavy black outlines. It's not a new idea. The LaserDisc coin-op *Dragon's Lair* was gaming's first playable 'toon in 1983, while LucasArts used cel-shading to memorable effect in the 1992 PC graphic adventure *Day of the Tentacle*. But cel-shading really came to prominence in *Jet Set Radio* on Dreamcast, where its stylized comic strip visuals and fluid animation perfectly suited the graffiti-tagging urban gameplay.

Where *Jet Set Radio* led, other developers followed. PS2 owners have already been exposed to the cel-shading charm in *Klonoa 2*, *Herdy Gerdy* and *Looney Tunes Space Race*. Naturally the technique is widely used in cartoon animation and has even been recently spotted in pop videos such as Robbie Williams' *Let Love Be Your Energy*. Virtual pop group Gorillaz are an entirely cel-shaded entity. Meanwhile, this year's E3 showcased a number of games for PS2 using the cel-shading technique, including *Gungame*, *XIII*, *Superman: Shadow of Apokolips* and *Auto Modellista*. So is it a fad or a future? Considering that the PS2 is capable of generating realistic 3D graphics, some could argue that the caricatured cuteness of cel-shading constitutes a visual leap backwards. But given the obvious wow-factor of *Auto Modellista* and *XIII*, it's tempting to view this exaggerated look as shift from the realistic to the artistic, an exploration of videogame style that's as relevant and bold a statement as filming a modern movie in black and white.

CELLULAR TONE

The technique appears to have invigorated some developers. Cel-shading places the player in a graphically refreshing environment, says Julien Barnes, Producer on the forthcoming FPS *XIII*. It offers comic-style storytelling but with a mature edge. Gamers haven't always been universally welcoming, however. Nintendo, for example, enraged legions of *Zelda* fans when it abandoned a hyper-realistic GameCube *Zelda* in favour of a cel-shaded version. Suddenly, the game's hero was not a realistically-animated, sword-slashing adventurer, but something more akin to a Powerpuff Girl — a wimp with a sword, large black eyes and floppy blond hair.

But cel-shading is being used in a variety of ways. For some developers, it's a necessity rather than a choice. If a game is based on an existing animated cartoon or comic then cel-shading is a vital visual tool. The forthcoming infogrames title *Superman: Shadow of Apokolips* is a case in point. Our aim was to replicate the look and feel of the animated series as closely as possible, explains Rob Smith, *Superman's* Senior Producer. It's an Emmy award-winning show and we felt that we should give the *Superman* fan what they'd expect to see. We did think long and hard about using cel-shading — some people in the games industry argue that it's become an over-used technique, but we always came back to the fact we're making a highly stylised game and should stick to the look developed by Burnett, Dini and Timms at Warner Brothers. It wasn't the easiest route to go, but we think it looks superb.

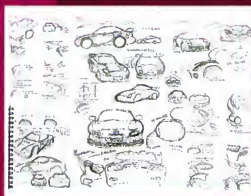
Not all games based on comic books or cartoons are taking the cel-shading route. *Wolverine's Revenge* has adopted a more realistic look. The style of *Wolverine* sits somewhere between total exaggeration and hyper-

■ **CARTOON ART** The cel-shading is characterised by bold blocks of colour and heavy black outlines.

THIS SHIFT FROM REALISTIC TO ARTISTIC IS AS RELEVANT AS FILMING A MODERN MOVIE IN BLACK AND WHITE

HOW TO DO CEL-SHADING

So you know what cel-shading is, but how is the look achieved? Thanks to Capcom and its cel-shaded racer *Auto Modellista*, we can show you.



1. ARTIST'S SKETCHES

First things first. Although *Auto Modellista's* cars are based on real vehicles, true to cartoon concept, the initial sketches are free to elaborate on the cars' lines to emphasize their presence on the road. Sort of a 'caricature'.



2. MODELLING

From the sketches, a wireframe model of each car is made and given a basic skin. Although technically very exact, the model produced still retains minute exaggerations of the car's real lines. Not easy to do.



3. CEL-SHADING

Now it's time for the cel-shading. Notice how shadowing on the car's body and windscreen is relatively blocky. There's no attempt to graduate it. At this point the car looks at its most cartoony.



4. THE FINISHING TOUCHES

The car already looks good but Capcom has a few more tricks up its sleeve in the shape of software called 'Artisoon'. The developer is keeping schtum about this process but, the finished car has a mixture of cartoon elements.

Q&A

THE MAIN DRAW

On the local front, Australian developers Infogrames Melbourne House were the first to use cel-shading in a PlayStation2 game, namely, *Looney Tunes: Space Race*. OPS2 spoke to Russel Comte, the art director from the Space Race's team, giving us an insight into cel-shading from a developer's point of view.

OPS2: What differentiates cel-shading from standard shading techniques?

RC: Cel-shading is a technique designed to emulate the hand animated cartoon characters, and as such renders the characters in a flatter, more controlled way. Total qualities of the surface are minimised, shape definition and profile are maximised.

OPS2: The cel-shading worked a treat in *Space Race*. How did you decide to use the technique before you started work on the project, or was it something you decided to implement along the way?

RC: Cel-shading was a definite design goal in *Space Race*, as it was seen as the most appropriate way to represent the characters, and allow the artists to adapt to the style of the Looney Tunes universe. It was a visual goal that became integrated into the rendering by the teams graphics programmers.

OPS2: You were the first development house in Australia to produce a game using cel-shading. Do you plan to do any other cel-shaded games in the future?

RC: Cel-shading can work well in many instances, and develop towards many varied styles. There is every possibility that we would continue with this technology on an appropriate title.

OPS2: From a developers point of view, what are the advantages of using cel-shading?

RC: There are plenty of disadvantages actually, as the rendering can become more complex. The real advantage is simply the accurate interpretation of the cartoon style.

OPS2: Are there any issues or difficulties to face when choosing cel-shading compared with using conventional visuals?

RC: The difficulties are there in the beginning as the artists adapt the models to a new way of rendering,

accepting light, shadows etc. We had the rendering system running relatively early in the development of *Space Race*, so the artists were able to see the "in game" models on the target machine. This was a great help visually.

The technique was actually quite complex, and as such the cost of rendering the models was relatively high.

OPS2: Will cel-shading open any doors for artists who might want to get into gaming development?

RC: This is a case of "right place, right time" I guess. If a top animator came by looking for work as we set out on a cel-shaded game, that candidate would be a desirable hire. We find that artists are able to invent and adapt many different styles based on the project at hand.

OPS2: Is the cel-shading phenomenon likely to be a passing fad, or something we're going to keep seeing more of?

RC: I think there will be plenty of cel-shaded games around in the future. I can also see the technique moving beyond interpretation of a style to development of its own style, by use of cel shading techniques blended with more advanced shading techniques and beyond!



CEL-BLOCK PS2

Here are some of the current and forthcoming games that take advantage of the latest cel-shaded graphical technology.



AUTO MODELLISTA

[CAPCOM]
The first racing game to feature cel-shaded graphics and arguably one of the best-looking PS2 games around. Think of it as *The Fast And The Furious* meets *Akira* – all sharp anime looks and some spattering rain effects to die for.
Out: December



BLACK AND BRUISED

[UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE]
More of a Ready 2 Rumble than a Knockout Kings, *Black And Bruised* aims to blend cartoon visuals with cartoon action and cartoon humour. There are 18 promised sluggers, all capable of fluid swiggers and animated grimaces.
Out: November



DARK CHRONICLE

[SCEE]
The second chapter of this quirky community-building RPG has come over all cel-shaded with beautiful results. Probably one of the more traditional of the PS2 cel-shaded posse, this is nevertheless shaping up to be a fine-looking game.
Out: TBC



DNA

[VRGN INTERACTIVE]
Cel-shaded graphics don't suit every game and in *Dark Native* Apocote, the stylised anime characters jar against the gloomy pseudo-realistic backdrops. This third-person action game starring a genetically-engineered soldier has limited appeal.
Out: Now



FUR FIGHTERS

[ACCLAIM]
Experience Fluffmatch! action, as cartoon animals do battle with ludicrously oversized guns. *Fur Fighters* was designed with a deliberate 'kiddy' look to the gameplay, heightening the fun that can be had when toy animals get to blow the stuffing out of each other.
Out: Now



GUNGRAVE

[ATVISION]
With its anime-inspired visuals (mostly in cut-scene form) this master blaster pits an assassin known as Grave against endless waves of criminal neo-works. The shrewd-don't-think gameplay has been created by Yasuhito Naito, famed for the *Trigun* series.
Out: December



HERDY HERDY

[EDDIE]
As belted the strange herd-em-up gameplay, developer Core Design opted for a fairytale cartoon look – all tinkling streams and perfectly mown meadows. As with most cel-shaded titles, you either loved it or hated it.
Out: Now



GIO GIO'S BIZARRE ADVENTURE

[CAPCOM]
Continuing the popular fighting series (well, it's popular in Japan anyway) the latest instalment in the *Juho* saga is a beat-'em-up-cum-action-adventure, heavy on the cartoon special effects and Italian mobsters in sharp, cartoon suits.
Out: TBC



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

[KONAMI]
No, don't panic. Konami hasn't abandoned MGS's realistic visuals and atmospheric camera angles in favour of Scooby Doo graphics. However, while the core game doesn't use cel-shading, some of Substance's additional VR missions definitely have a stylised, almost cartoon quality to them.
Out: March 2003



SLY RACCOON

[SCEE]
This PS2 game isn't just a ledge-leaper with a cel-shaded layer of gloss. Instead of simply replacing textures with flat-shaded polygons, developer Sucker Punch has created a completely believable cartoon world for you to play in.
Out: TBC



SUPERMAN: SHADOW OF APOKOLIPS

[INFOGRADES]
It should come as no surprise that the *Superman* graphics engine recreates the distinctive look of the animated TV series. Inspired by *Batman – The Animated Series*, *Shadow of Apokolips* is a Metropolis, use X-Ray vision, leap tall buildings in a single bound, be a 'super' man...
Out: Now



SPACE RACE

[INFOGRADES]
Populated as it is by a cast of classic Warner Bros cartoon characters it's hard to imagine how *Space Race* could have come to PS2 without those familiar bold outlines. This is a perfect example of cel-shading by necessity. When a game is based on a cartoon, it's a no-brainer to want to go with cel-shading.
Out: Now



KLONOA 2: LUNATA'S VEIL

[NAMCO]
Klonoa is a retro platformer given a thorough PS2 makeover to enhance its linear action. Although nobody would deny the artistic merit of cel-shading here, the process also helps to define the lead character against often fast-moving, colourful backgrounds.
Out: Now



WACKY RACES

[INFOGRADES]
Like *The Simpsons* games, the appeal of *Wacky Races* is its accurate recreation of the distinctive look and feel of the fondly-remembered Hanna-Barbera cartoon. But controlling Dastardly and Muttley, Peter Perfect, Lazy Luke and Blubber Bear sounds more fun than it actually is.
Out: Now



XIII

[UBI SOFT]
It may seem like a strange decision to make a cel-shaded FPS, but *XIII* is based on the Belgian comic and its bold visual look is ideal. Built around the *Unreal II* 3D engine, *XIII*'s cartoon overlay is far from basic, blessed with real-time lighting shadowing and numerous special effects.
Out: March 2003

real, says Genepool Art Director Tarlochan Randhawa. For *Wolverine*, we wanted a game world loosely based in realism with extraordinary characters and unfolding events. If the game world was to look exaggerated and bizarre from the start, as a cel-shaded world covered in black outlines would, then the impact of these extraordinary characters and events could be severely lessened.

DONT CEL YOURSELF SHORT

For developers who aren't creating games based on comic book content, the reasons for using cel-shading are different. On a basic level, the technique provides a fresh graphical spin on tried-and-trusted gaming concepts. *Auto Modellista* piques our interest because there isn't another racing game like it. It's *Akira* meets *The Fast And The Furious* – anime-style speedsters in a comic-book landscape. *XIII* has enjoyed similar hype. There isn't another FPS game that uses the cel-shading technique, so *XIII* automatically stands out head and black-outlined shoulders above crowd. The distinctive style is a big part of cel-shading's appeal. But there still needs to be a good game underneath the paint-job. The whole experience of *XIII* is more than just cel-shading, adds Julien Bares. We also use additional techniques such as sharp shadows to create a graphically aesthetic world.

Cel-shading certainly has its advantages and it's not easy to dismiss its sudden widespread use as the latest graphical craze. Games like *Sly Raccoon* and *Auto Modellista* prove that cartoon graphics don't have to be basic. They retain high polygon counts and while the characters and models have less detail than their realistic counterparts, there is often more variation and flexibility to the design and more fluidity to the animation. Without motion-captured animation, complex facial textures and moving hair, game designers are free to concentrate more on environmental effects and facial expressions, both of which enhance immersion. A caricatured hero can be just as engaging, perhaps even more so, than a console-created human. You only have to look at the latest full-length digital feature films such as *Monsters, Inc* to see it.

Some games do seem to be using cel-shading as a graphical gimmick, pointlessly applying comic book visuals to an existing game structure in order to chase the zeitgeist. Cel-shading's novelty will linger if it is not over-used, but there seems little chance of that. However, even if these extraordinary-looking games eventually become commonplace, it seems that video games may have taken an important step forward.

Cel-shading is a sign that the games industry has started to mature, believes Nick Cook, Development Director at *Conflict: Desert Storm* coders Pivotal Games. We are finally at the stage where new styles for games can be fully explored. It's really just a sign that games are now a mass market entity and there's room to start exploring new ways of presenting our products to the players.

It's not hard to draw the same conclusion. □

"CEL-SHADING IS A SIGN THAT THE GAMES INDUSTRY HAS STARTED TO MATURE"
NICK COOK, PIVOTAL GAMES



■ **COMIC BOOK** Gio Gio's *Bizarre Adventure* mixes cel-shading and beat-'em-up.

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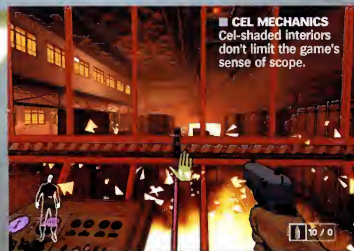


NAME XIII
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER Ubi Soft
WEB SITE www.ubi.com
RELEASE March 2003

PERCENTAGE
COMPLETE

60%

■ **UNLUCKY?** This cel-shaded bigshot is XIII, the lead 'toon in Ubi Soft's long-awaited FPS.



■ **CEL MECHANICS**
Cel-shaded interiors don't limit the game's sense of scope.



■ **KERPOW!** In XIII, complex textures give way to simpler 3D models and blocks of bold colour. It's certainly distinctive.

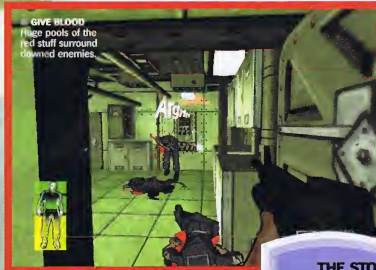
XIII

A cel-shaded FPS? OPS2 sketches in the details on Ubi Soft's XIII.

UNLUCKY FOR ONE? Well, meet XIII. He's the good guy in Ubi Soft's striking new FPS. You might not have heard of him before – and he's not entirely sure who he is himself... as the protagonist in an epic comic book series created by Belgian author Jean Van Hamme (the creator of *Largo Winch*) this amnesiac hardnut is caught in a major right wing conspiracy to take down the American president (see *What's the Story*). You've got to find out what this guy's role is, and, more importantly, why everyone is trying to kill him. And you've got to do it in a world where everything thing looks, feels and sounds like a comic book adventure.

DOES IT FEATURE GOOD-LOOKING MODELS?

That depends on your taste. True to its hand-drawn origins, XIII makes use of clean, bright primary colours and simplistic modelling to give a more iconic look. The 50 or so characters featured in this game use around 1,000 polygons each – a fraction of what usually gets rammed into 3D models these days. But the comic book touches don't stop there. Each location has a different colour theme running through it – a technique comic book artists often use to give shape and cogency to a page. Plus, when a guard spots you, a speech bubble screaming 'Alert' appears next to him. When a grenade goes off, the word 'Blam' explodes across the screen. If you stop dead still, XIII's commando sixth sense sharpens like a bowie knife, and the faintest footsteps become



GIVE BLOOD
Pools of the red stuff surround downed enemies.



THE STORY SO FAR

A man is washed up on a beach, and suffering from amnesia, his only identity clue is 'XIII' tattooed on his chest. Through a series of encounters, XIII discovers he was a highly skilled killer and may have been involved with a conspiracy to murder the President.

BOW SELECTA As in *Half-Life*, the crossbow is an accurate and effective long range stealth weapon.

1 / 9

audible, or visible as the case may be: 'Tap, tap, tap...'

WHAT ABOUT STEALTH...?

Visited Ubi Soft's Paris studio recently, we were shown just a handful of XIII's 35 single-player stages. Gameplay mixes all-out action set-pieces with stealthier quests. One stage has you creeping through the air ducts of a submarine base on a covert mission to free an important prisoner. Here subtlety is the key. One false move and there'll be guards all over you like flies on rotten fruit. Luckily there's a range of stealth weapons – throwing knives, harpoons and a good old neck break among them – so the bad guys can be dispatched quietly. And if conventional weapons are thin on the ground the developers suggest that you take a good look around: bottles, chairs and fire extinguishers are among the many objects that can serve as an impromptu deadly weapon, should the situation demand it. You can also lift bodies and stash them out of sight of the vigilant guards. Not that killing is always the answer. When grabbed from behind, enemies make handy hostages... or human bullet shields. XIII's a good guy, but he's not that good.

AND MULTIPLAYER ACTION? As you'd expect from using the *Unreal Tournament* engine, XIII features four-player split-screen action, too. There are 16 multiplayer levels and several game modes promised. Along with a standard Deathmatch mode, for example, there's Cover Me, in which one player acts as sniper while his team mate is a scout heading toward the opposing team's base. What's more, Ubi Soft is also ready and able to support online gaming, possibly with up to eight players accommodated. For now the only question remaining is: just how good is XIII going to be? Mull over what you know now, throw in multiple endings and nifty playable flashback sequences, then take a look at the gorgeous images dotted around these pages. Then draw your own conclusions... □ KS



SPEECH BUBBLE
In keeping with the comic style, enemies scream 'Noo' when they're hit.

8 / 0



BAR BRAWLER
Glass bottles can be smashed and used as weapons.

A BOTTLE



ONOMATOPOEIA
Sound it out folks... BA-OO-MM!

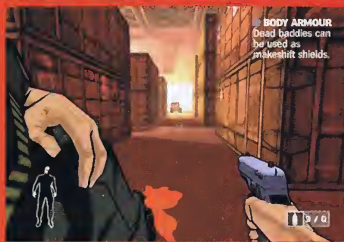
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XIII boasts a number of innovative features and neat touches that suggest this will truly be a first-person shooter to reckon with. Roll on March 2003.

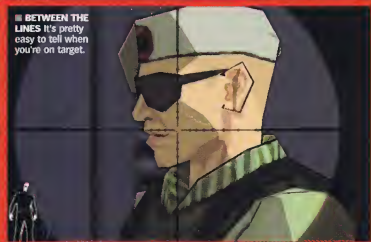


WHAT WE WANT	WHAT YOU WANT	WHAT THEY WANT
■ Grenades that explode with the word 'Kraakatoom!' spread wide across the screen.	■ Lee Asher from Maclean's wants XIII to be out now, if not sooner. Calm yourself, man!	■ Producer Julien Bares says XIII is a darker spin on cel-shading than the usual cartoon fare.
HOT OR NOT?		
FRIGID	TEPID	WARM
	HOT	BOILING
		MELTDOWN



BODY ARMOUR
Dead buddies can be used as makeshift shields.

1 / 0



BETWEEN THE LINES It's pretty easy to tell when you're on target.

FIGHT LIKE A SUPERHERO.



EACH X-MEN HAS EXPLOSIVE AND UNIQUE SUPERHERO POWERS TO TAKE ON OTHER X-MEN—IT'S THE MOST INTENSE FIGHTING YOU'VE EVER EXPERIENCED.



USE INCREDIBLE COMBINATIONS AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS TO BRING 24 DIFFERENT X-MEN MUTANTS TO LIFE!

X-MENTM NEXT DIMENSION

X-men Next Dimension is the only console fighter game that carries epic super hero showdowns across expansive 3-D Levels.



PlayStation 2

MARVEL

ACTIVISION

activision.com

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PLAY THE WORLD

Australian PlayStation2 gamers will soon be able to enjoy online gaming, playing against opponents from all over the world. Sitting down for a game with your mates won't always mean you'll be in the same room.



Sony Computer Entertainment Australia has announced its plans for the introduction of a PS2 network gaming service to be launched in Winter 2003. Managing Director Michael Ephraim said online gaming would soon further expand the capabilities of PlayStation 2. "I have no doubt that the launch of online gaming will also expand the PlayStation community in Australia, and help further position PlayStation 2 as the entertainment device of choice for Australian households."

Sony is currently establishing partnerships with broadband Internet Service Providers, and trials will begin in early 2003. Australian gamers could be forgiven for being a tad cynical as to how smoothly things might work after the letdown Aussie Dreamcast owners experienced when it came to online gaming, but Sony have already proven that they know how to nail this with their efforts in other territories.

The United States and Japan already have successful online PS2 networks up and running, and tests are about to begin in PAL countries like the United Kingdom and, of course, Australia. In the US, Sony's *SOCOM: US Navy Seals* and EA's *Madden NFL 2003* have become hugely popular with thousands of regular players. In Japan, there are already over 100,000 PS2s connected, with most players enjoying the delights of Square's online role playing game *Final Fantasy XI*.

THE PACKAGE DEAL

Sony will release a Broadband Gaming Pack in Australia mid-next year. The pack includes a PlayStation2 Ethernet Network Adaptor, an online game and a start-up disc featuring demos of upcoming titles. A Memory Card is required to save your settings. The package will be sold at a similar price to a PS2 game (around \$100) and through usual retail outlets. Because a game will be included in the bundle, you'll effectively be getting the network adaptor for free.

Users will be able to access online multiplayer games through a participating broadband network – you will be able to choose your own connection rather than being forced to

use a particular Internet Service Provider.

Telstra and Optus offer high-speed cable Internet services to many Australian homes, while a raft of companies like Ozemail, AOL, iPrimus, Telstra, Optus, Netspace and TPG offer ADSL connections. ADSL isn't as fast as cable but uses traditional phone lines so it can offer broadband to those who don't have cable available to their home.

Sony have pledged that consumers will be able to play online any network enhanced PS2 game which they have purchased for free for at least the first year.

The first wave of online titles will include *SOCOM: US Navy Seals*, *Hardware: Online Arena*, *Destruction Derby Online Arena*, *Twisted Metal Online*, *Frequency 2*, *My Street*, *ATV Offroad Fury 2*, *This Is Football 2004* and *World Rally Championship Online*. Better still, Sony Online Entertainment is working on a completely new PlayStation2 version of *EverQuest*, the world's most successful and popular MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game).

ONLINE SUPPORT TEAM

Publishers such as Capcom, Electronic Arts, Activision, Take 2 and Eidos have also announced they are working on PS2 online titles. *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* and 4, which already include online features, will be compatible with the new network. Those with concerns that the third party publishers may not be so supportive of a move to online gaming should consider that with the PlayStation 2's massive install base worldwide, it's in their best interests to create games that will appeal to the widest possible audience, and that will include the gamers who want to play online. With support already existing, there's also the "Keeping up with the Joneses" factor. If all that separates two titles is that one has online capabilities, it's a no-brainer as to which one has more appeal to the punters.

MONOPOLY-FREE GAMING

Sony's plans are radically different to Microsoft's Xbox Live system. While Xbox Live is a "closed"

environment that Microsoft controls and charges a monthly fee to access, PlayStation2 owners will have a lot more freedom of choice.

Sony promises the platform will be a "highly diverse network that enables content companies, game publishers and ISPs to provide gamers with the broadest selection of new online experiences and entertainment. The network will not be constrained by any one company acting as a gatekeeper of the content or the consumer."

This was a genuine problem for the Dreamcast, with more than a few gamers being quite disgruntled at the need to sign up for a new Telstra account when they already had another ISP they were happy with, or more to the point, still on a contract with.

SAFETY FIRST

However, security is still going to be tight, so hackers won't have free reign. "The existence of a secure online environment is a crucial long-term consideration for gamers and content providers alike," said a Sony statement. "The PlayStation 2 network platform will benefit from the proprietary Dynamic Network Authentication System (DNAS) that will offer a secure environment for business partners and consumers."

Chris Deering, President of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, said online gaming on PS2 would be "simple to set up, exciting to play and affordable." "PlayStation 2 owners with broadband Internet access will be able to purchase a Network Adaptor and immediately start playing a great selection of multiplayer games online," he said.

"Our philosophy is to have a very diverse and inclusive platform that will enable content companies, games publishers and ISP portals to provide consumers with the broadest selection of new online experiences and entertainment from a variety of sources."

If you want to be one of the first to experience online PS2 gaming in Australia, keep an eye on PlayStation's Australian website at au.playstation.com. The website will soon recruit PlayStation2 gamers for the first Australian trials.



THE GAMES

A peek at the first wave of online capable games that will hit Aussie shores to coincide with the PS2 Broadband Adapter

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS

A realistic, squad-based military shooter in the Rainbow Six mould developed by Sony. There are single player missions, but it's when fragging human opponents that you'll have the most fun. It was the first broadband console game with voice communication between players and over 175,000 Americans are now playing regularly online.



TWISTED METAL ONLINE

Think *Twisted Metal Black*, except with the maniacal teenager down the street playing as Sweet Tooth and some bloke from Germany taking cheap shots with a rocket. The game offers non-stop car combat craziness, with 20 intricate arenas and 15 vehicles. Up to eight can play at once. In the US, the game is bundled free with the network adapter, so expect a similar deal here or a low pricepoint because there is no single player mode.



FREQUENCY 2

The sequel to Sony's deliciously addictive music rhythm game offers more than 25 new tracks and the ability to challenge players online. There are online tournaments, ladder rankings, and you can jam with others. Sony has chosen a mix of well-known artists like Garbage and Weezer as well as up-and-coming acts, and there's a wider range of music styles rather than just electronica. Gameplay is very similar to its predecessor, with players building up tracks layer by layer with well-timed button presses.



MY STREET

A collection of simple, fun and hopefully addictive little games for up to four players. Set in a cute little neighbourhood, the mini-games include Marbles, Dodge Ball, RC Racing, Volleyball and Lawn Mowers. There's also an entertaining Tetris or Columns-style puzzle game called Chemistry Set. Good luck getting your Mum off the PS2 once she gets her hands on that one.



ATV OFFROAD FURY 2

An online-enabled sequel to the entertaining, but sadly overlooked all-terrain vehicle racing game from Rainbow Studios. Whether racing opponents online or split-screen, action is fast and frantic, and players can perform tricks as they hurtle through the air. Tracks include vast outdoor environments as well as motocross-like indoor arenas.



THIS IS FOOTBALL 2004

Sony's soccer simulations have always offered a fun kick-about, especially in multiplayer, but have failed to offer the amazing depth of *Pro Evolution* or the flashiness of *FIFA*. The ability to challenge other players online and compete in massive tournaments may give the series the edge it needs to rise to the top of the premiership table.



WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP ONLINE

The next instalment of Sony's officially licensed rally simulation will feature online play. Tournaments and rankings should make an already addictive game even more tasty. There will be extra incentive when trying to shave milliseconds off your lap times given that worldwide fame is yours for the taking.



TRIBES: AERIAL ASSAULT

Based on the *Tribes* games, considered by many PC gamers to be the best team-based first person shooters around, *Aerial Assault* will give the PS2's online community a very different sort of game to anything previously released in a console game. Two groups of futuristic troops battle each other over huge maps, using vehicles and elements of their respective bases to work as a team. Capture the flag and three other game modes especially created with teamwork in mind should provide countless hours of gibbing goodness. Even if you can't get enough people together for a fully fleshed out game, bots that play intelligently fill the gaps!



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 AND 4

The world's best skateboarding games already allow you to challenge other players online. You just bung in your Ethernet network adapter from your cable modem into the USB port of the PS2 and the game automatically searches for servers to play on. You can also use some USB modems and dial into your ISP. Naturally when Sony's official network adapter is released, it'll be even easier to fly online with the Birdman.



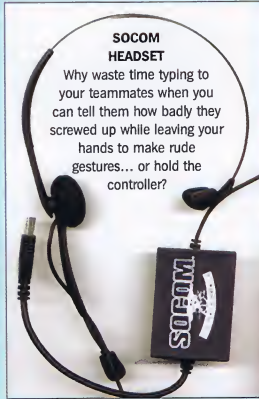
THE REST

Salivate at the prospect of online titles like *Gran Turismo 4*, *Resident Evil Online*, *Smackdown 5*, *Hardware: Online Arena*, *Destruction Derby Online Arena*, *Everybody's Golf* and a new online-equipped version of *Auto Modellista*. We're crossing our fingers that Square will give us the life-changing *Final Fantasy XI* too.



SOCOM HEADSET

Why waste time typing to your teammates when you can tell them how badly they screwed up while leaving your hands to make rude gestures... or hold the controller?





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We grilled Sony Computer Entertainment with all the tough questions that you're dying to have answered. Here's the official response

How much will it cost to play PlayStation 2 games online?

After consumers have purchased the PS2 Broadband pack, which will be the price of a regular PS2 game, and have arranged a broadband service with an ISP, then playing any network enhanced PS2 game which they have purchased will be free for at least the first year.

Selected additional content, such as Everquest, will be charged and billed on a monthly basis by the content provider.

In the USA you can use analogue modems with the PS2 network adaptor, why are PAL gamers restricted to Broadband only?

Sony Computer Entertainment Australia believes that broadband is key to delivering an enhanced interactive online experience. Many of the games in the online range require broadband and those that do not play more efficiently on broadband. For gamers, the "always on" benefit of broadband is a distinct advantage, and broadband is often less costly to use than extensive use of a metered narrowband service.

Previously Sony had implied that a Hard Disk Drive would be a key part of their strategy. What has happened?

PlayStation 2 is equipped for Hard Drive enhancement and the HDD remains a key part of our longer term plans to deliver a full home entertainment service, based on the PlayStation 2 (such as downloadable demos and games, downloadable music, jukebox management and digital video recording).

At present it is possible to deliver a comprehensive network gaming experience with just the use of a Memory Card to store the network settings. Many of the features of network games such as SOCOM's voice commands and the lobby service required to match up players, are held on the game server rather than the client machine.

Will FFXI be released in PAL territories?

The game requires a Hard Drive to play. FFXI has been extremely well received in the Japanese market, along with the Hard Drive. But Squaresoft has not made any announcements regarding FFXI in PAL.

Will you be able to access the Internet using your PS2?

We are not going to simply move the desktop Internet, as currently utilised, to the TV. PS2 will revolutionise home entertainment with completely new interactive experiences.

The online gaming service is delivered over Internet Protocol. Whilst there are no concrete plans at this time, it is anticipated that experiences on the PS2 network will have some similarities to applications accessed via HTML Internet, but with significantly enhanced "TV quality" graphics and sound.

Who are your ISP partners and when do you expect to commence trials?

The PlayStation2 network gaming experience is engineered to be accessible through most broadband service providers. Sony has relationships with many providers of both DSL and Cable Broadband services across the PAL territories. Announcements concerning specific providers will be made as the launch is finalised. It is our intent to make connectivity on PS2 available to the widest possible number of PS2 owners, provided that the quality and reliability of the service involved is consistent with "plug and play" standards.

Trials with a limited number of each ISP's consumers will start early in 2003.

Will there be have instant messaging, chat rooms, buddy lists, etc?

The design of the service includes these features, and we will introduce them progressively once the initial network gaming service has been launched, and where they can be reliably and consistently delivered.

Will there be a common user name and password?

Such a feature may be an option but it will not be required. Some players like to use different names for different games, and some of our content partners may wish to require individual registrations, for security or privacy purposes, as with the Internet.

Will you have "voice disguises"?

Our technology provides for this capability. It may be a feature in some games, but will be an option, and may be restricted from use in some applications. There are some concerns about fraudulent use which need further study.

Will you be bundling a game like SOCOM with the Broadband Gaming pack?

SOCOM is certainly one possibility but this may vary by territory and no final decision has been made yet. More information will be made available on our website in a short while.

How popular do you expect the service will be in 2003?

Whilst not an identical comparison, results thus far in the North American market suggest that demand will be high and will grow quickly. We are not making specific projections at this time, but we anticipate substantial consumer adoption rates in countries where broadband access is widely available and PS2 has high penetration.

Does the PlayStation2 online gaming network have an official name?

Not yet.

EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES

An all new version of the most popular online RPG is destined for PS2

Unlike RPGs that you'd be accustomed to on your PS2 which have a clearly defined end to them, MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games) do not. The object in EverQuest is to develop your characters to untold levels of power, and doing so is made infinitely easier by working as a team with other players. Instead of collecting a group of ragtag warriors and wizards throughout the course of the game, you actually meet other players, form adventuring parties, and make your own decisions as to where you should be going and what you should be doing.

The sense of adventuring in a living, breathing world is made more prominent by the fact that time keeps ticking over, regardless whether or not you're playing. EverQuest is an ongoing game that you come back to, rather than one that stops when you power down. Characters are saved on the servers which host the game rather than on the gamer's machine.

When your character dies in EverQuest, it's not game over, but forget about resetting and loading from a save point. You'll lose some experience and gold (which is extremely important), making every encounter an intense situation.

EverQuest Online Adventures isn't just a port of EverQuest for the PC, as PS2 owners will be getting a brand new game, set 500 years prior to the original

EverQuest. Most elements of the game will work as they did in the original EverQuest, although combat is supposedly being sped up and streamlined relative to the PC version.

Streamlined doesn't mean 'stripped back' though, as there's more gameplay to be had than in standard RPGs. Developing a character to level 50 [the maximum level in the game] should take anywhere from 600-800 hours!

Something to keep in mind with MMORPGs is that maintaining servers for people to play on produces an ongoing cost for the developers, and these are paid for by the players through a monthly subscription fee. The figure itself has yet to be announced, and shouldn't be that much, but it's something to keep in mind for gamers on a budget.

A further consideration is a USB keyboard, as EQOA will involve a lot of player interaction. The option to assign phrases to controller buttons will be there, but take it from the OPS2 team that have played EverQuest on PC, if you're serious about putting in the hours required to get to level 50, you'll want a keyboard. No doubt a host of online games will take advantage of this peripheral.

Until Final Fantasy XI is confirmed for a release outside of Japan, EverQuest Online Adventures will remain unchallenged as the most original RPG experience for Aussie PS2 owners in 2003.



Rage
PRESENTS

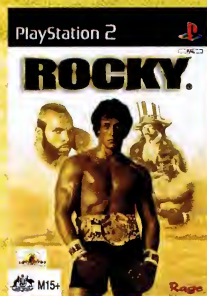
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GAME
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THE ITALIAN STALLION
ROCKY
BALBOA
VERSUS
THE SOUTHSIDE SLUGGER
CLUBBER
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PlayStation 2

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CAN YOU GO THE DISTANCE?

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BIG IN JAPAN?



Bringing to all fine and happy people the best look we can at Japan games yes! The games there is no playing in Australia. Why? Too much silly fun! Take our quiz away too. It's opposite!



Where were video games invented? If you're thinking 'Japan' you'd be absolutely... wrong. But no other country has embraced digital entertainment with quite the same fevered passion and uncensored creativity as the land of the rising sun. Games may have been born in the US, but they grew up and got delinquent hanging out in Akihabara.

The thing is, for every 'triple A' *Devil May Cry* or *Metal Gear Solid 2* that we get to play here, there are less well known Japanese developers churning out dozens of more eccentric titles that you're never likely to see, and

less likely to 'get', even if you played them. Some of these games are big in Japan, some are leftfield in their own back yard, and some are just so odd that you wonder how they even got past the initial pitch without being laughed out of the boardroom.

And so, in the spirit of cultural understanding, *OPS2* has waded through incomprehensible manuals and wrestled with dead men's handles and rubber monsters to bring you some of the highlights and lowlifes of the Japanese videogame market. Let's examine the evidence to see if Japanese games are indeed as insane as charged...

EXHIBIT A: BAD MAGISTRATE



■ HALF FAT
Bad Magistrate takes an odd premise, then drags it for a very long walk.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Looking at the box art, this game's not giving much away. We see a tubby bloke with feudal Japanese top knot and kimono gurning from the front cover and throughout the manual. Could he be some kind of magistrate? Possibly not a good one?

SETTING THE SCENE

The intro movie goes like this: Tubby gurning fella eats cascade of golden coins spewed by shabby-looking bloke. Tubby gurning fella walks along, oblivious as pretty girls and then (bizarrely) a velociraptor walk past. Tubby gurning fella dances around a bit, then fade to title screen. Thanks a bunch. Great help.

LET'S PLAY!

We skip the first couple of hours where a lot of bad language was directed at *Bad Magistrate* as *OPS2* struggled to wrestle any sense out of the proceedings. You play the titular you-know-who, a thoroughly nasty piece of work who's having a fine old time taxing the local peasants out of house and home. They want revenge so they send assassins to get you. However, being a rich, bad magistrate you can afford to equip your



■ TAXING TIMES The game's intro movie does nothing to clarify what you actually have to do.

pad with state-of-the-medieval-art security measures. Each level is divided into two parts. The first sees you ordering your flunkies to place bear traps and spiked pits around your spacious home. The second sees the AI assassin break in and try to track you down before the traps claim his life, while you run around followed by your servants. All that's missing is the Benny Hill music. Exciting? You have no idea. No, wait a minute...

VERDICT

Well, it's not the game's fault. It's not like it was called *Superb Magistrate*, now, is it? Looks bad, and plays as well as you'd imagine a game with the word 'magistrate' in the title would.



EXHIBIT B: LET'S GO BY TRAIN! RYOJO-HEN



TRAM BAM

You've driven the Bullet train, now experience a world of urban tramways.



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

There's no getting away from it. This game is, in every sense of the phrase, a train driving sim. Actually, *Let's Go By Train! (Densha De Go!)* is a pretty famous franchise in Japan and has been churning out variations on the genre since 1996. *Ryojo-Hen* is the latest incarnation and takes gamers on a whirlwind tour of (wait for it) suburban train and tram lines! Looking at the rear of the box, *OPS2* is disappointed to see that we missed out on a train driving peripheral complete with dead man's handle and beverage cup holder.

SETTING THE SCENE

There is no scene setting. There's no story here, just full-on tram and train driving action. We do, however, learn that we're going to be let loose, public transport-style, around the charming sprawls of Kyoto, Matsuyama, Enoshima and last but not least, Hakodate.



TO AVOID BRINGING SHAME ON OUR EMPLOYER, WE CRANK UP THE JUICE AND AVOID ALL STOP SIGNS

LET'S PLAY!

We opt for a gaudy-looking tram on the Kyoto line and, not afraid to laugh in the face of salaryman overload, opt for the crammed, morning rush hour shift. After setting off with the doors wide open and without announcing the departure, we eventually get the hang of the controls. However, by this point we're running ten minutes behind schedule. So to avoid bringing shame on our employer we crank up the juice, ignore all stop signs and try to make up time. Apparently this is wrong. So too is slamming on the brakes ten metres before the end of the line sending passengers flying. Bollocks.

VERDICT

Frankly, we're hooked. *Let's Go By Train* may look simple but it's actually pretty tricky to get right. Whether you'd want to bother is a moot point, but slap a machine gun nest on the roof and this could be a crossover smash.



ON TRACK It may look like a tedious train sim but *Let's Go By Train!* is actually quite enjoyable and pretty tricky too. No, really. Stop laughing.

JUST THE TICKET Until you've experienced train driving from the cabin POV you haven't enjoyed the all the nail-biting action the game has to offer.



TRAPPED! Set traps, collect taxes and run away. That's about it for BM.

JAPANESE GAME POP QUIZ HOTSHOT-SAN

Cast your eyes over this list of Japanese PS2 game titles and see if you can sort out the real ones from those we've made up...

Do Don Pachi Daijyoku DV
Shin Megami Tensei III: Nocturne
SD Gundam G Generation Neo

Shadow Tower Abyss

Gakuentoshi Baranowal

Dogstation

Get Backers

Innocent Black

The Convenience Store 3

Venus & Braves

Fooligan

Ragingbless

Sweet Legacy

Toukon Inoki-Do

Bus Landing 3

Space Fisherman

Get Bass Battle

Kishin Heidan J-Phoenix Cobalt Platoon

Panel Quiz Attack 25

Gigantic Drive

Ever 17: The End of Infinity

Simple 2000 Series Vol. 8 The Tennis

Simple 2000 Series Vol. 9 The Love Adventure

Bittersweet Fools

Seven: Lacemorse's Cavalry Corps [Mega Hits]

Hack Vol. 2: Malignant Mutation

Grand Heat

Ponie's Poins: Sweet Favour

Get Backers: The Stolen City of Infinite

Culdcept 2nd Expansion

Only You: Level Cross Drama

Battle Ball Park Perfect Play Pro Baseball

Pachislot Complete: Giga Zone

Thread Colors

The Train Simulation Real

Momotarou Dentel X

Actual Combat Pachislot: King of Beast DX

Space Venus Starring Morning Musume

Shin Yugiho Duel Monsters 2: The Succeeded Memory

Seaman Forbidden Pet: Crazy Doctor's Experiment Island

...notsup of 1029MA
...notsup of 1029MA

EXHIBIT C: COMBAT QUEEN



KILLER QUEEN They may not look it, but this bunch are Earth's last hope. God help us.



MONSTER FUN If the bad acting doesn't kill the Combat Queens, the rubber monster will.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

RAY OF HOPE *Combat Queen* sets out its stall damn early with a box cover photo of five Japanese girls clutching unconvincing rayguns and dressed in the kind of impractical 'combat fatigues' that could only have been dreamt up by a professional pervert. The slender manual confirms this by listing the crack team's vital statistics above their characters' abilities.

Suspiciously, a glossy, eye-candy-packed bonus booklet went missing within minutes of the blister wrap hitting the bin, as did an *OPS2* staff member who'll remain anonymous... Still, the phrases 'Movie Shooting Mode' and '3D Shooting Mode' suggest there is some kind of legitimate game waiting on the disc. Not so sure about the 'Special Movie', mind.

SETTING THE SCENE

It seems that a mad scientist has released a plague of giant insects into the atmosphere, declaiming Tokyo! Thankfully, the authorities are on the ball and deploy a pink Jeep filled with nubile J-Pop stars to tackle the threat. Phew.

LET'S PLAY!

Dear God. All that's sandwiched snugly between gratuitous shots of the aforementioned Combat Queens toting flimsy rifles with all the menace of newborn kittens is a shonky shooting game where swarms of badly rendered insects fly over real video footage of Tokyo's mean streets. It all goes pretty well until one of the 'queens' gets killed by a man shuffling around in a rubber centipede suit. There follows a heart-rending death scene, but *OPS2* is laughing too hard to notice.

VERDICT

If Foxtel's Adult channel wanted to start publishing videogames they could do worse than droll a path to *Combat Queen's* front door. This is hormone product placing at its finest. Well, maybe 'finest' is the wrong word.



JUST BUGGIN' When the gameplay finally arrives, it turns out to be crap.

EXHIBIT D: MY SUMMER VACATION 2



OH BOY Fed up with driving sims? How about a childhood sim instead?

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

RAY OF HOPE What's this? It looks like a quality game may have slipped under the radar. True, there's no gore, monsters or even a whiff of action promised on the game cover, but that said, the sun-dappled screenshots of various holiday activities on the reverse look great. We've not a clue what's going on but it's not like *Ignorance* is going to stop us now.

SETTING THE SCENE

The Intro movie contrasts gorgeously realistic environments and almost Fisher Price-like people to introduce the main character (a little boy called Bok) travelling on a boat to a sunbaked island where he's going to spend his summer vacation. It looks like we may have the first Western sighting of a new genre: the childhood sim. Get ready for a bucketload of whimsy.

LET'S PLAY!

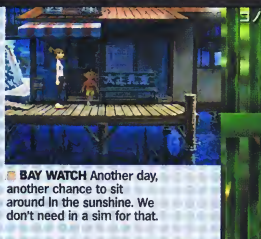
Ahh, bless. Look for the word 'offbeat' in a Japanese dictionary and there's a picture of this game. Your mission? To have as nice a holiday as you can. From your base (a room in a seafront guest house) you basically

wander around the island finding things to do. Diving for bottlecaps in the bay, fishing, collecting and mounting butterflies (stop that), jumping off swings, making beetles sumo wrestle one another on a tambourine and looking so darned wholesome that strangers give you money to buy soda. It's all here. And oddly enough it's a really enjoyable change of pace from the regular, linear, action-stuffed gameplay of most titles.

VERDICT

Relaxed, unhurried and as unstructured as a game can be. It's easy to see why overworked salarymen and women in Japan love *My Summer Vacation 2*. And for the same reasons, you can see why it would stiff here in the West, it's a shame really, it's quite charming... now where's that *Combat Queen* disc?

LOOK FOR THE WORD 'OFFBEAT' IN THE JAPANESE DICTIONARY AND YOU'LL FIND A PICTURE OF THIS GAME



BAY WATCH Another day, another chance to sit around in the sunshine. We don't need in a sim for that.



Q&A

WHILE MY GITAROO GENTLY WEEPS

We caught up with Yukio Shimomura, a Director at KOEI's Soundware Department and leading figure on the deliciously oddball *Gitaroo Man*, to ask him about Japan's more leftfield gaming tastes.

There's such a wide variety of different game genres here – Japan seems to celebrate and encourage niche market games in a way Europe and the States don't. Why do you think that is?

Overall, I think the main reason is that in Japan, gaming plays a bigger part in the overall culture compared to the West. People tend to play more games and it's more widely accepted – obviously recently the market has been exploding in the West. But if you look in the past, Japan has pretty much been the place for games. It's a small country!

Many Westerners have the perception that Japan is the source of the majority of weird and eccentric game titles. How do you feel about that, and how do you think your games fit into that tradition?

That's a fairly accurate perception I can't deny – look at *Gitaroo Man*. Games have become a feature of society, and various types of games to suit a variety of tastes have arisen as a result. Basically, it comes down to the sheer number of titles in development. Accordingly, there are going to be large numbers of 'niche' titles as well as popular hits.

I think *Gitaroo Man* definitely fits into the 'weird and eccentric' category – even in Japan. Of course it has a novel control scheme, but I think even more, the tempo and feel of the game could be considered a bit weird. The truth is, we kind of went for an American feel for the game, but perhaps our impressions as Japanese were a bit off...

Which PS2 games or game genres would you consider to be the most Japanese in spirit (ie, that they could only be created by Japanese)?

I would say that KOEI's historical simulation games can only be made by Japanese! Aside from that, of course if the subject matter itself is Japanese. I haven't gone around asking foreigners, but in terms of



genres, I think that the linear story-driven RPGs, such as *Dragon Quest* or *Final Fantasy*, could probably only be made by Japanese. I don't think that having a set path seems as interesting to Western gamers, compared to a game which offers more freedom in where the story goes.

■ **DOG STAR** Can you imagine pitching a game starring this mutt to the money men in the UK?



■ **"ADOPTED?"** The local kids break some news to our hero. Well, not really, everyone's nice in *My Summer Vacation 2*.



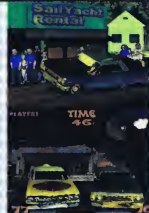
EXHIBIT E: LOWRIDER

WHAT'S IN STORE?

Love driving games but wish there was a bit more dancing in them? Welcome to the world of *Lowrider*, an inspired title currently being developed by Pacific Century CyberWorks Japan that is set to bring about the Inspired union of rhythm action and the internal combustion engine. According to the PCWCW press release, "Lowriders started in 1950s in Los Angeles when merry Mexican Americans unbeaten by racial discrimination and poverty enjoyed faking used cars as new cars by dressing up, restoring or applying neat paint to old cars. With advancement of technologies, such cars are now finished up more artistically and the height is lowered to legal limit." Merry Mexicans?

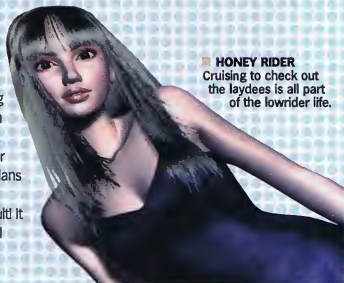
LET US PLAY?

Featuring modes based on genuine lowrider competitions that showcase hopping hot rods and trucks with spinning flat-beds, this unhinged offering has Japan only release written all over it. But, what's this? A spokesperson for the developer has told OPS2 that there are plans to cruise *Lowrider* into the PAL market in the near future. Result it looks like insanity is a universal language after all...



■ **CAR WARS** At last! A rhythm action dancing car game.

■ **HONEY RIDER** Cruising to check out the laydes is all part of the lowrider life.



MAKE YOUR OWN JAPANESE VIDEOGAME TITLE

Welcome to OPS2's Japanese Videogame Title Generator. For a shot of authentic gibberish, simply plug a word from each of the columns below to create your own Japanese game name. Remember, if the finished title makes more than a sliver of sense you should go back and start again. Sugoi!

Super	Groove	2	Universal	Beast
Tender	Pachinko	3	Veal	Low
Crazy	Slam	4	Mobile	Wind
Eternal	Halibut	5	Ninja	Domination
Raging	Mech	6	Tactical	Sonata
Mega	Baseball	7	Xeno	Quest
Rampant	Ecstasy	8	Sebastian's	Crisis
Sexy	Void	9	Winning	Edition
Municipal	Rim	XL	Irresponsible	Blitzkrieg
Wistful	Beat	Jr	Muscle	Mastodon
The	Disseldorf	EX	Sweet	Tennis
Demon	Armageddon	Best	Pure	Championship
Battle	Fandango	Champ	Pocket	Wrestling
Joy-Joy	Memorial	Mix	Celestial	Fantasy
Space	Ultraman	Vs	Xanadu	Pants

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MAX PAYNE
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PRISONER OF WAR
SPIDER-MAN

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Review Charter

FACT: OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE'S reviews are the best in the business. Our crack squad of reviewers play the games longer, harder and better than anyone else. And we absolutely love what we do.

It's this dedication that means you can trust our scores above anyone else's. Whether a game's superb or sewage, our experts will tell it like it is with buckets of opinion rather than a few cheap gags and some PR nonsense. Our experienced reviewers have written for the game industry's most revered publications, both here and abroad. What's more, our writers have plenty of 'heritage' in the industry, having a collective history spanning into decades. Rest assured that these are opinions you can trust.

Next time you head off to spend your hard-earned cash on a PlayStation 2 game, make sure you read our reviews first.

REVIEW RATINGS

HERE'S WHAT OUR REVIEW SCORES STAND FOR:

- 10/10: Nigh on revolutionary. A game that could change the face of gaming forever
- 09/10: A truly astonishing game. If you have a PlayStation 2, you need this now
- 08/10: Highly recommended
- 07/10: Good, solid fare that's definitely well worth a look
- 06/10: Better than average, and ideal for hardcore fans of the genre
- 05/10: An average game
- 04/10: Poor, but still with the odd moment
- 03/10: Extremely disappointing
- 02/10: To be avoided
- 01/10: Beer mat

THE OPS2 AWARDS

We don't hand out high scores for nothing so when you see one of these, you'll know it's a sign of quality. Look for them on game boxes.

GOLD SILVER BRONZE

The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to PS2 games that score that magic 10/10. The only game to get Gold is MGS2. Too right!

The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!

The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

media
DVD / MUSIC / MEDIA

DVD RELEASES 096

Blade II / Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring - Extended edition / Men in Black II / ET the Extra Terrestrial / Naked / Amélie / The Time Machine / The Secret Life of Us (Season 2) / The Hard Word / Bend It Like Beckham



THE GETAWAY

058

Will Sony's crime-sim make off with our spare time and social lives?

AUTO MODELLISTA

064

A new breed of cartoon-powered speed. OPS2 get under the hood of Capcom's cel-shaded racer.

VIRTUA TENNIS 2

068

With a strong all-round game, Virtua Tennis 2 is the new player to beat on the Tennis game circuit.

HAVEN: CALL OF THE KING

070

Following hot on the heels of Ratchet & Clank, Haven joins the PS2's new wave of peachy platform games.

LORD OF THE RINGS: FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

072

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

074

NFL 2K3

076

NBA 2K3

077

078 HARRY POTTER

AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

080 SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY

082 DEFENDER

083 WRECKLESS:

THE YAKUZA MISSIONS

084 007: NIGHTFIRE

086 MICROMACHINES

088 ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY

089 SUPERMAN:

SHADOW OF THE APOKOLIPS

091 LEGAIA 2: DUAL SAGA

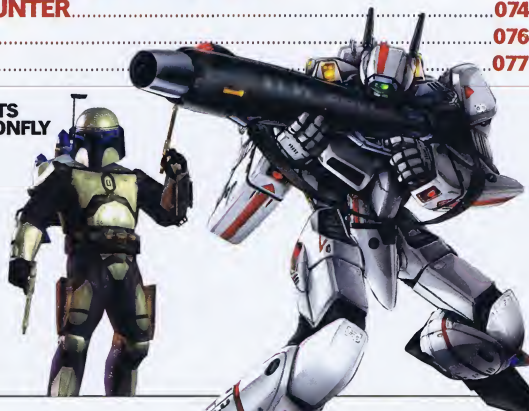
091 GUM BALL 3000

093 CRASHED

093 RALLY FUSION

094 REIGN OF FIRE

094 VIRTUA COP ELITE



It takes a little more to make a



MARKED FOR DEATH
Carnage and chaos – all in a day's work for our Cockney anti-hero.



CAPITAL PUNISHMENT
S019 officers provide Carter with back up on some missions.

THE GETAWAY

Shut your mouth, put your knickers on and read this review.

DEVELOPER: TEAM SOHO
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEB SITE: WWW.THEGETAWAY.CO.UK
GTA2 PRICE: NO
WIDESCREEN: YES
SURROUND SOUND: NO



BACK STORY

The Getaway is – and let's not underestimate this – criminally late. It began life as a PSone title back in 1996. Having shifted focus to PS2, Team Soho set about digitally recreating vast swathes of London, but as the budget spiralled and release dates slipped, the game started looking like an albatross around SCE's neck. Having cost in excess of \$12 million, nothing less than a massive hit will do. Thankfully it looks like it's all come good.

It has taken over four years and \$12 million but *The Getaway* has finally escaped the clutches of the Sony-owned development outfit of Team Soho. This hugely ambitious adventure, which combines driving and shooting missions in cinematic style, is truly ground breaking and a must play for all PS2 owners. Better make that all PS2 owners over 15 years old, as this is the most "adult-oriented" PlayStation game yet released.

Apart from the obvious comparisons which can be made to *Grand Theft Auto 3* and *Vice City*, *The Getaway* is more influenced by films than other games. It has the classic touches and cinematic set pieces inspired by such gangster flicks as *Heat*, *Goodfellas* and, more importantly, Guy's Ritchie's *Snatch* and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*.

Like Mr Madonna's films, *The Getaway* is all about the intermecne plotting, brutal violence and expletive-riddled dialogue of the London criminal underworld. Be prepared for an onslaught of f-words, which does still shock slightly in the context of a game, but with all 'swear' words now fair game on TV after 9.30pm, it's certainly nothing you haven't heard before. And if you've been to England, you'll know it's highly realistic.

There's also a lot of Cockney (inner London) slang used during the course of the game (thankfully made clear with quality voice acting), so you'll get used to spilling "claret" (blood) and trying to avoid the "filth"

(police) if you want to avoid getting "clipped" (killed). The racism sprinkled throughout (Asians are "gook bastards" and blacks are "monkeys") is more likely to offend than the swearing but it's all in context and plays an important role in the overall plot.

WHAT'S THE STORY, MORNING GLORY?

The star of *The Getaway*'s first 12 levels is Mark Hammond, a man just out of prison (or "the nick" in Cockney lingo) who is hard-as-nails but still basically good at heart. The opening animation sees Hammond's wife gunned down in the street and son Alex kidnapped by three thugs. Hammond chases off after the culprits but soon finds himself framed for his wife's murder and Alex out-of-reach, held prisoner by one of London's biggest crime lords.

The Cockney 'godfather' in question is Charlie Jolson, a cigar-chomping member of the National Front (a racist far-right political organisation), and he's a very nasty piece of work indeed. Jolson forces Hammond to do his dirty work around London with the promise that he won't kill his son if he does as he's told. The jobs Charlie is giving are missions ranging from on-foot infiltration and assassination through to things like ramming a police van off the road to rescue a gang member.

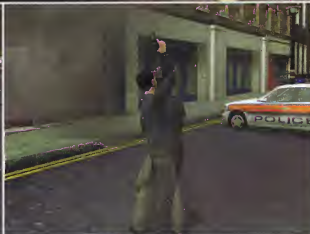
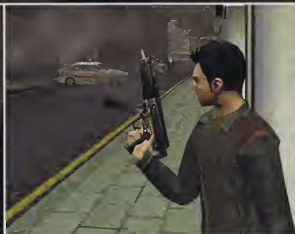
The first job is shooting up your friends' trendy club down at Soho, and before long you are on missions



■ **HAMMING IT UP** Shooters, motors and a bag full of roadies. *The Getaway* couldn't be more Lock, Stock...

SWEET JEHOVAH, WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT? THIS REALLY IS LONDON

■ **SOHO PSYCHO** Carter's shootout at the Republic bar is heavily inspired by Michael Mann's *Heat* and provides a truly amazing set piece.



It takes a little more to make a

HOW TO...

TAKE SOMEONE HOSTAGE

Walk up to any character in the game and press **Q** to grab them. Now, press **Q** and, depending on which character you're playing as and whether or not a weapon is drawn, this is what happens. Look away now, ladies...



Unarmed, DC Carter will stamp on the back of a suspect's knee, push them to the ground and slap on the cuffs. "You're nicked me old China!"



Armed with a gun, he coshes them around the back of the head. Police brutality? Maybe. But Carter doesn't play by the book – he gets results...



Now things get really nasty. Without a gun equipped, Hammond simply snaps his victim's neck. The accompanying crunch satisfies and sickens in equal measure.



And so to the coup de grace. Hammond presses his gun against the unfortunate's temple. Murder is merely a button's press away, but is this 'gangland' or 'execution' style?



COP KILLER Hammond reacts badly to yet another speeding fine. You'll never take me alive, copper...

LONDON'S BURNING!

Exploding barrels are a staple, but these ones frazzle enemies with a satisfying sizzle.



THE KNOWLEDGE

The Free Roaming mode gives you time to explore. There are ten hidden vehicles to find including a golf buggy and a go-kart.

POP SHOT Ducking out from behind cover is a crucial skill, particularly as you're usually heavily outnumbered.

"NOT ONLY ARE YOU THE POLICE'S MOST WANTED MAN, AS YOU'LL SOON BE ON THE TOP OF THE MOB'S HIT LIST TOO"

London quickly becomes a gang war zone. Not only are you the police's most wanted man, as you'll soon be on the top of the mob's hit list as well. Survival (along with trying to save Alex) is now what it's all about.

The twisting, well-scripted story is revealed in long animated cut-scenes that blend seamlessly with the action. Hammond's missions, both behind the wheel and looking down the barrel, get increasingly tough, but just as everything reaches a climax of gunfire and blood, the action switches over to the perspective of DC Frank Carter – a rogue cop obsessed with busting Jolson. Carter stars in the remaining 12 levels, but the tension never lets up and the stories interlink as Carter is up against the same foes as Hammond, as well as trying to catch crooked cops.

WHAT'S ALL THIS FUSS THEN?

So why did *The Getaway* take so long and cost so much? Well a major issue would have been mapping and translating the 28 square miles of inner London that you drive and run around in. The detailing of this virtual city is truly incredible and if you've been to London it is a joy just to burn through the streets you have walked down. If you've never been to the English capital, then this game may save you the airfare – apart from cruising Soho and Oxford Street, you can visit Buckingham Palace, Hyde Park, Trafalgar Square

POLICE, CAMERA, ACTION During the chase sequences, you really do feel like a getaway driver in a movie.

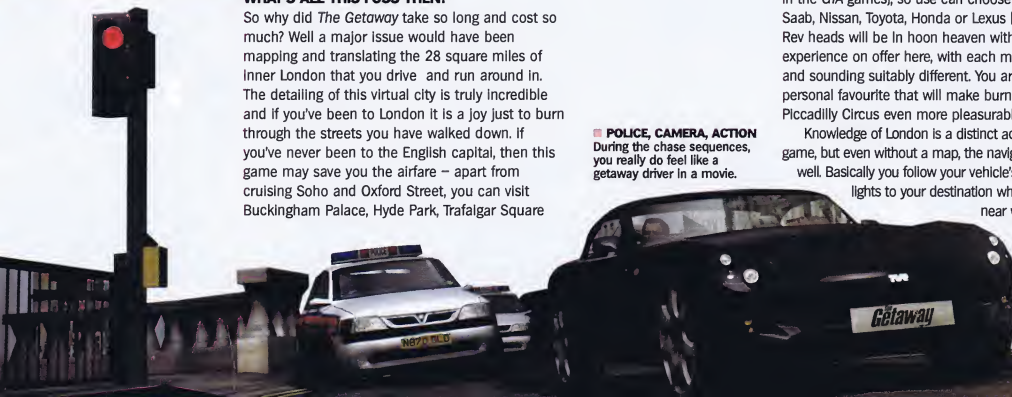
and many other world famous landmarks.

The realism even extends to London's infamously bad traffic and the streets (many narrow and one way) are often clogged with vehicles, including ambulances, trucks and, of course, London's famous taxis and double-decker buses. This can make even the simplest chase or rendezvous mission quite difficult, but you'll get to know short cuts or just resort to the 'crash through or crash' approach, hijacking other cars at gun point when your current one starts to smoke and catch on fire.

Topping off the realism is that the cars on the road are actual 'brand name' models (unlike the generic cars in the GTA games), so use can choose your favourite Saab, Nissan, Toyota, Honda or Lexus (amongst others). Rev heads will be in hoon heaven with the driving experience on offer here, with each make of car handling and sounding suitably different. You are sure to find a personal favourite that will make burning rubber on Piccadilly Circus even more pleasurable.

Knowledge of London is a distinct advantage in this game, but even without a map, the navigation system works well. Basically you follow your vehicle's flashing indicator

lights to your destination which when you get near will be indicated by hazard lights. However, if you've smashed up your car too much you



HOW TO...

DRIVE LIKE STEVE MCQUEEN

Keep getting nicked? You mug! Our hot driving tips will sort you right out.

1



When the police are about to ram you, wait until the very last second before slamming on the brakes and watch them fly straight past... Just like Top Gun.

2



Fool the rozzers into driving the wrong way by darting from left to right. A bit like throwing a dummy in PES2, only with potentially lethal consequences.

3



The best way to lose a tail is by constantly changing lanes and never braking. Keep your nerve and John Q Law will soon plough into a bus.

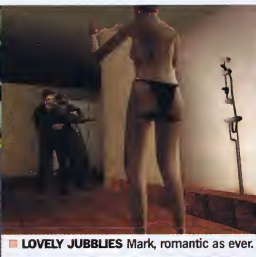
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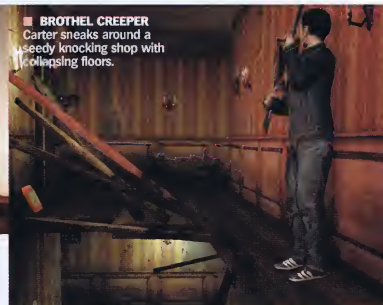
And if all else fails, stop the motor, get out and pump them full of hot lead. Think Harvey Keitel in *Reservoir Dogs*. It's brutal, but very effective.



OVER THE TOP In Stealth mode you can shoot blind around any object in the game.



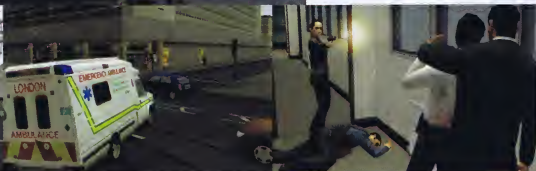
LOVELY JUBBLIES Mark, romantic as ever.



BROTHEL CREEPER Carter sneaks around a seedy knocking shop with collapsing floors.



THIN BLUE WHINE Put on your sirens and the vehicles further up the road will pull aside to let you pass. The jam sandwiches have got plenty of poke, too.



FEMME FATALE Yasmin helps Mark on the later missions, and she can handle herself.



won't know where you're going unless you recognise the surroundings. It seems a tad odd that you need working indicators to remember where you should be going.

When playing as Hammond, you'll have to avoid accidents and running over pedestrians if you don't want to be chased by the police. The London street 'bobby' isn't armed but can call up his mates. In cars who can get very aggressive, ramming your vehicle and opening fire. Police also set up roadblocks, including spike mats to flatten your tires, and will try and shoot out your tires if that fails. It's not quite as full on as the tanks and choppers of *GTA*, but when you're a "wanted man" you'll certainly know it.

DC Carter gets a much easier ride through the city with ordinary cops leaving him alone, even when running over pedestrians and generally causing havoc. However both Hammond and Carter come under attack from rival gangsters who will ram you or pull up alongside and spray the car with bullets.

Just as in the *GTA* games, you can get out of your vehicle at any stage and hijack another, or get out your gun/s and get rid of those pesky pursuers. Taking a hostage to use as a shield is an option, and Hammond/Carter have some very cool Solid Snake style moves, being able to crouch and roll as well as sneaking along walls and popping off some shots around the corner.

The interior locations you visit are even more detailed than the streets, and you'll be shooting up a warehouse, art gallery, crack house, hospital and even a police station. The atmosphere of each location is captured very nicely, and there are some tasty lighting/shadow effects in some places. There are some stealth

missions where the aim is not to be seen, but in general the body count is high and the violence is often visceral in intensity, with Hammond able to snap a hostage's neck or pistol-whip an enemy.

There are no health packs or weapon boxes lying around, in fact, there's no on-screen interface at all in *The Getaway*, making it a very realistic and 'immersive' experience. You pick up weapons (pistols, shotgun or



YEAH BABY! Put the gun down or Docor Evil gets it!

JOY RIDE

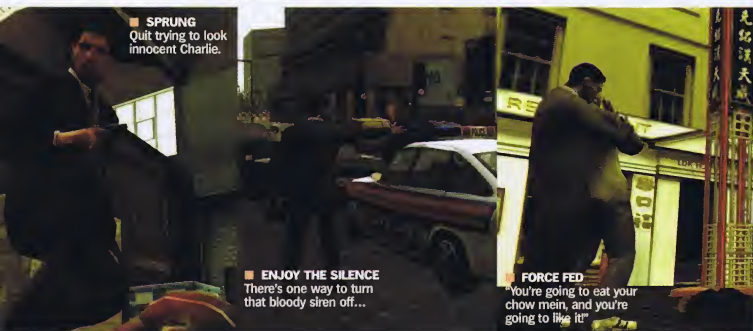
Drive over 50 fully licensed cars. Brands include Nissan, Lexus, Saab, Toyota and Honda, plus fire engines, buses, ambulances and black cabs.

GETTING WHIPPED
Pistol-whipping is the order of the day for non-lethal jobs.



FITNESS FREAK You can always hoof it, but that car's yours for the taking.

SPRUNG Quit trying to look innocent Charlie.



ENJOY THE SILENCE There's one way to turn that bloody siren off...

FORCE FED You're going to eat your chow mein, and you're going to like it!

sub-machine gun) from dead bodies and can only regain health by finding a wall to lean against. OK, so watching blood disappear gradually isn't so realistic but it does work well with the gameplay. Some of the most intense moments are when another enemy pops his head around the corner just as you are starting to heal your limping, bleeding body.

GIMME THE LONDON LOWDOWN

While *The Getaway* is a genuinely exhilarating experience, it is not completely perfect and there are some slight quibbles, with the most important being controls and camera angles on the shooting missions. While driving is a joy (a rear-view would have been nice though), being trapped in a tense firefight with lots of enemies can sometimes be painful due to targeting. You eventually learn to deal with it but the camera can be erratic and can't be manipulated manually.

The enemy AI is generally good but in the stealth missions you'll have to use trial and error to get through some situations, with your choice of actions being quite limited. The main game is quite linear and while completing the missions is hugely enjoyable, your reward of a free roaming drive around London perhaps could have been supplemented with some taxi/ambulance missions such as those found in *GTA Taxi* missions were apparently planned but time ran out, which is not so hot after being in development so long.

The above issues are minor though, and *The Getaway* will supply a huge amount of fun to all mature PS2 gamers. While main competitor in this new 'violent crime' genre, *GTA: Vice City* may have more variety and be less linear, *The Getaway* has more realism and some

intense cinematic set pieces. If you loved *GTA III* and *Vice City*, then *The Getaway* is also a must.

With all the swearing, graphic violence and criminal behaviour it contains, *The Getaway* will be lucky to avoid a media sensation. The random criminal acts you will no doubt commit aren't as severely punished as they are in *GTA*, but the game is part of a new generation of video games aimed squarely at adults. Most PS2 owners and game buyers are over 18 and *The Getaway* provides further evidence of the need to implement an R18+ category for games in Australia, as big budget games such as this are going to be increasingly directed at adults only.

If you're one of those many 'mature' gamers out there, you'll love *The Getaway* – a compelling, gripping and intense experience providing an amazing take of a life of crime in London town! **Stuart Clarke**

THE GETAWAY

Why we'd buy it:

- Breakneck driving through packed city streets
- Scrupulous depiction of London
- The most cinematic shootouts seen on PS2

Graphics

Evocative interiors and London looks pixel perfect. **10**

Sound

Great engine fx, ambient sounds and use of audio hints. **10**

Gameplay

Motorised mayhem and stylish gunplay. **09**

Life span

After the 24 missions you unlock "free roaming" mode. **09**

Why we'd leave it:

- Slight issues with the camera and controls
- More linear than *GTA Vice City*
- Slightly samey missions

An intense, white-knuckled ride through the streets of inner London. A groundbreaking game – not for kids.

09

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Q&A

BRENDAN MCNAMARA

We spent a morning banged up with *The Getaway's* Writer and Director, Brendan McNamara and it wasn't long before he turned informer. Here's the low-down, straight from the developer's mouth.



So, how does it feel to have the game finished?

Kind of like finishing high school – you lose four years and then move on it's been such a big undertaking that it feels like the end of an era.

At what point did you really feel the game had come together?

The first time we showed people it was seamless – you could get out of the car, run around and enter an interior location with no load – that was when people really 'got' the game.

How much pressure has there been to get it out before Christmas?

There's been enormous pressure, just because the expectation in Europe is so high – and at one stage people didn't know if it was going to be any good.

Did you ever think it might not come out?

Well, I didn't, and I don't think the management team funding it did either. But we had some difficult times when I had to

ask for big extensions and more money with cap-in-hand. But I don't know if you can be as ambitious as we've been, trying out new technology and not take this long.

What happened to the Taxi mode that was going to be in the game?

We really wanted to do it but we basically just ran out of time. It might make it into the Japanese version, though – a cockney wanker rip-off-the-tourists model.

Are you worried the game is going to cause controversy?

I think the subject matter could be controversial, but we set out to make it for an adult audience, including people between 18 and 50. We are reasonably comfortable that the material we've made is suitable for that age group. The beauty of having the story is that players won't be doing bad things just because they're fun to do – the story gives them a reason. Mark's kid has been kidnapped and in that situation everyone would do something pretty crazy.

HOTTEST DEALS NO TRADE IN REQUIRED

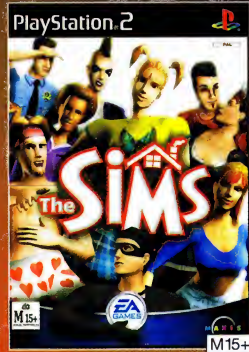
CHECK OUT OUR HUGE RANGE OF NEW RELEASE AND CLASSIC TITLES INSTORE



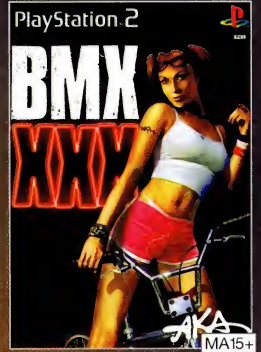
Available late January.



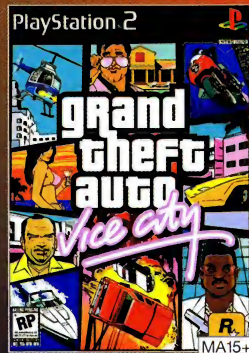
Available mid January.



Available late January.



Available mid January.



GAMES CLASSIFICATIONS: M15+ - Mature (recommended for persons 15 years and over).

MA15+ - Restricted (restricted for sale to persons 15 years and over, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian).

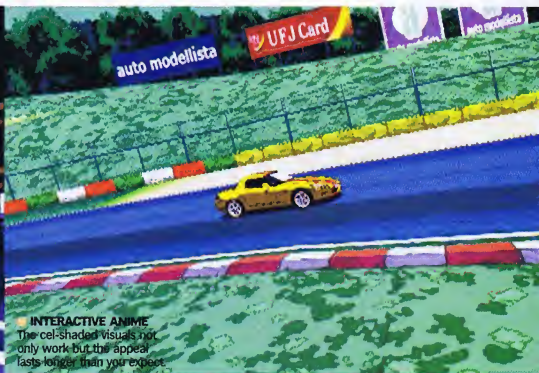
Cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer.
Offer ends 22nd January 2003.



MYER



GPB:0000-4130/MW5455/PSM



INTERACTIVE ANIME

The cel-shaded visuals not only work but they appear faster than you expect.



Ruin be... (text is partially obscured)



TARMAC KING Win cup races to unlock bonus cars.

AUTO MODELLISTA

Can this stunning racer keep pace with the hotrods already ruling the PS2 circuit?

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEB SITE: WWW.CAPCOM-EUROPE.COM
60HZ MODE: YES
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO



If you're going to release a game onto a console already flooded with titles of the same genre then it better have some new ideas. Using their oracle-like supply of gaming wisdom Capcom have proved up to the task, making sure their suave new racer *Auto Modellista* stands out on the track. Rather than use conventional polygons to construct the cars and tracks in AM, similar to all the other racing titles on PS2, Capcom have instead opted to use cel-shading. The end result is that AM looks totally unlike anything else on the system. While the cel-shaded textures look bright and lively, the car models still remain realistic and detailed. The gameplay too adheres to this "feet in both camps" ideology, since while the game demands frequent heavy braking and serious driving, players don't need to have a mechanics diploma to spruce their car up into a "tarmac monster".

When you first jump into AM you'll be greeted with three modes. There's the VJ mode (see opposite page); a stock standard Arcade mode that features single race options, a Versus mode (two-player option), a Time Attack mode and finally Garage Life mode which houses the main single player aspect of the title. Here, AM parades its features,

showing off the game's strongest point - car personalisation and instant accessibility. Straight away players can adopt a Japanese speed machine like the Lancer Evolution into their garage, without having to win cash by piddling around in a Suzuki Cappuccino.

After you select a car you can make umpteen decisions regarding its appearance from adding a rear spoiler, to changing the paint job. Want a pink car with a daisy decal on the bonnet? You got it. Want to paint your WRX green and mud brown and have a number plate reading 'DV8'? You can do that as well. You can even design your own decals, although the process is kind of fiddly, so editing an existing decal is probably the best way to get your name on the side of your dream machine. Once you're satisfied that your zooming 'sex on wheels' is visually akin to your idea of cool, then you can start work on improving the car's inner workings. Of course, the really good components must be worked for, and herein starts the roar of many engines.

When you take your car onto the track in Garage Mode you'll be competing through seven different race events that are unlocked as you progress. The first four events contain five races or so, where only two need to

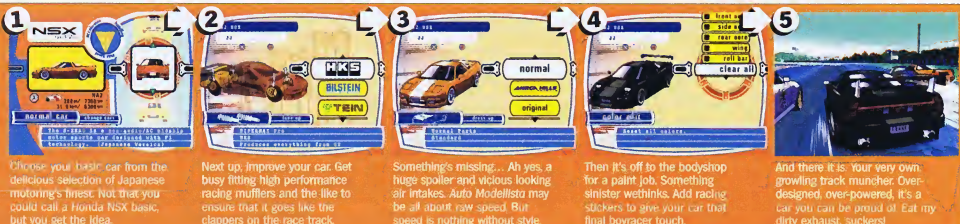


TWEAK WILLED Less of a sim than GT3, but no less stacked with technical data.



CHANGING VROOMS

Auto Modellista wants you to enjoy tweaking and personalising the contents of your garage. Here's how easy it is to make a cocky pocket rocket of your own.



Choose your basic car from the delicious selection of Japanese motoring's finest. Not that you could call a Honda NSX basic, but you get the idea.

Next up, improve your car. Get busy fitting high performance racing mufflers and the like to ensure that it goes like the clappers on the race track.

Something's missing... Ah yes, a huge spoiler and vicious looking air intakes. *Auto Modellista* may be all about raw speed. But speed is nothing without style.

Then it's off to the bodyshop for a paint job. Something sinister swirls. Add racing stickers to give your car that final boyracer touch.

And there it is: your very own, growing track muncher. Over-designed, over-powered, it's a car you can be proud of. Eat my dirty exhaust, suckers!



HEY MR VJ

Auto Modellista looks good, but with the game's Video Jockey editing suite you can make it look even better.



If proof were needed that Auto Modellista is all about looking good, you can find ample evidence in the game's excellent replay editing suite. Save a replay of a triumphant race and you can layer it with visual effects, overlays and even add music and sound effects. It's a gimmick, to be sure, but a fine one nevertheless. Very few racing games have quite this much style.



■ **SLICK TYRES** Race on day and night tracks and in wet and dry conditions.



■ **CINEMATIC** Few racers are blessed with Auto Modellista's superb detail.



■ **WHEEL-TO-WHEEL** Enjoy the close racing. But sadly, not online.



be beaten to progress through to the next event. In such events you can take your car back to the garage between races and tune up for the next track. The final three events however are continuous and consist of multiple races with a points system to determine the winner at the end. From here whatever car settings you've chosen at the start will remain throughout all the races. This isn't too difficult, however, as most of the tracks bunched together in each of these multi-course events are quite similar in nature, so you won't have to win on the fast straights of one of the highway tracks and then take the same car onto the winding Rokko Hill.

After you win an event you unlock a slew of goodies, rather than receive money. The items include new decals, cars, and even objects to decorate your garage with; you'll also gain access to more powerful engines and mufflers, making each new event quite winnable. Unfortunately this means that these seven events are too easy as your car is always one of the best on the track, leaving the player to either go through the events again with another car, or else take to the track for some time trial action. Unlike other racers where the career mode is the meat of the game, taking ages to complete and demanding the use of multiple cars, it seems Auto Modellista's Garage/Career mode is over too quickly.

Thankfully AM is quite enjoyable to play. Whilst your cars can't take damage they do feel quite weighty and when reaching speeds of up to 250 Km/h and beyond, the car's steering will stiffen up accordingly. Subsequently, adherence to the laws of slowing down and driving a correct line before entering a corner must be obeyed if there is to be any chance of success. AM features none of the arcade styled powerslides found in titles such as Ridge Racer and every corner can potentially throw you back into last place if not handled with respect. That said, the AI drivers don't seem to offer up nearly as much challenge themselves, relying on your track errors to

overtake you. Even on the hard setting in Arcade mode the faster cars never seem to know how to aggressively race and box you in, a lot of the time proving to be a benefit as you utilize their slipstreams.

The cars themselves are genuine, featuring a lot of the more popular cars from Japanese carmakers such as Mazda, Mitsubishi, Toyota and those of a similar ilk. Some companies, however are better represented than others. For instance, Nissan has twelve cars in the game including the Skyline, while Subaru only have three, though the WRX is covered. So despite the fact that Auto Modellista is nowhere near as extensive as Gran Turismo in terms of the number of car companies and cars themselves, there are still enough vehicles for this not-so-serious, oh-so-flashy racer to get by with.

The tracks, however, are a different story. There are only six normal tracks in the game, with five of these being reversible, and a bonus rail controlled car track that must be unlocked. As mentioned, some of the tracks are also quite similar in theme and style which works well if you need to race continuously on them without adjusting your cars settings, but is a major drawback when there are so few tracks in the whole game. For instance, of the six tracks there are three Tokyo highway tracks that all feature long straights and a few corners to navigate, leading to racing déjà vu all to often. More track variety as well as some weather options for each track would've been an added bonus.

Another shortcoming is the sound. AM features a corny arcade soundtrack full of horribly overproduced electric guitars and 'mixed in a moment' electronica. None of the tracks seem to stand out at all and players will no doubt find themselves selecting the mute track option before long. The corn-factor is even more evident in the voiceovers



■ **CAR WARS** A huge roster of Japanese roadsters will satisfy your lust for both style and ludicrous speeding.





■ **A FRACTION OF THE TRACTION** Individual tyres lose grip

■ **NIGHT RIDER** Night-time Road racing is a religion in Japan



■ **SHARP ANGLES** The replays are reminiscent of GT3-A Spec.



■ **ZOOMED IN**
Small details and light reflections are visible up close.

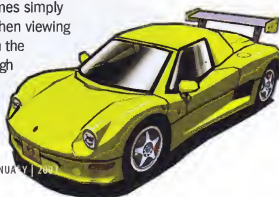


■ **BACK FIRE**
Hitting the barrier gives a power pop from the engine.

■ **A BIT FLASH**
The visual effects are decidedly over the top.

that feature arcade styled comments of unqualified praise. Comments like "You're number one" and "I've never seen such technique" can only be heard so many times before they start to irritate.

All that annoying drivel will start to fade thanks to the distractingly wonderful visuals. It's like you're in the middle of a car chase in an '80s cartoon as you glide along the screen with zero pop-up in sight, thanks to some clever track design, and colours that never look drab (if anything, they're gaudy). The night highway tracks feature an abundance of city buildings lining the track and, rather than simply appear at a certain point in the distance, they fade in smoothly. The framerate is consistent and smooth apart from when you're racing on the Tokyo Area 2 track which features rain effects and there are a lot of cars on screen. Even then stutters only last for half a second or so, with no real effect on gameplay. Also, most impressive is the blistering sensation of speed the game delivers. It's fast enough when viewing the game from behind your car, but becomes simply exhilarating when viewing the game from the bonnet, although your ability to equip for



upcoming corners is slightly reduced.

Although loads of fun, *Auto Modellista*'s lack of a longer Garage Mode as well as its humble number of tracks is worth keeping in mind if you're after a long single player championship experience. Fortunately the two-player mode as well as a time trial option that lets you compete with a ghost car are redeeming features. These help extend the life of this gorgeous game that plays well and has something few other racing games can boast – personality. □ James Ellis

AUTO MODELLISTA

Why we'd buy it:

- Fantastic cel shaded graphics
- Great sense of speed
- You don't have to be a rev head to enjoy it

Why we'd leave it:

- Needs more tracks with more variety
- Garage/Car mode is too short.
- Cheesy arcade voiceovers and music

Graphics	Vibrant, colourful with a great frame rate and zero pop-up	0/5
Sound	Nasty music with some B-grade voiceovers	0/5
Gameplay	Solid engine, but the real drivers don't challenge	0/7
Life span	Too few tracks and a short Garage mode	0/7

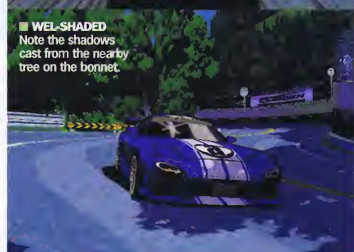
Casual racing fans that consider themselves designers rather than mechanics should have a go of this funky offering.

08

OFFICIAL VERDICT



■ **WEL-SHADED**
Note the shadows cast from the nearby tree on the bonnet.



■ **HIT THE SKIDS**
Kudos to you if you can write your name.





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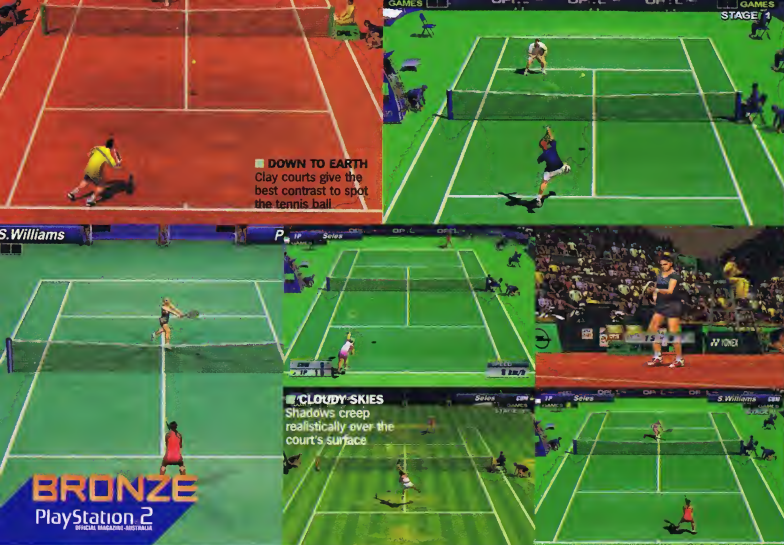
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PUBLISHER: SEGA/ACCLAIM
DEVELOPER: HITMAKER
PRICE: \$69.95
PLAYERS: 1-4
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.SEGA.COM
60HZ MODE: YES
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO



■ BACK STORY

Unlike the 2K3 games from Visual Concepts which was made for console gaming only, the Virtua Tennis titles both debuted as arcade machines. For arcade titles that use the most basic control setups, it's a testimony to their gameplay that they offer a deep enough gaming experience as a console game.

VIRTUA TENNIS 2

Sega serve up an ace tennis simulation to wind up top seed.



Sega may not have enjoyed the sort of success that they'd like to have with the Dreamcast, but it's undeniable that they've got a knack for developing good games, and their range of sporting titles for their now defunct system were among their best. The most popular of all of these titles was undoubtedly the Virtua Tennis series, with the sport having global appeal, and the game boasting uncommonly intuitive gameplay. Despite a lack of new features or improvements with its move to PS2, Virtua Tennis 2 has a strong enough all-round game to wipe the virtual courts with Smash Court Tennis and NGT.

At a glance you'd be forgiven for thinking that Virtua Tennis 2 might lack the polish of a game such as Namco's Smash Court Tennis, because it has blatant aliasing issues going on. The problem is most profound when there's a colour clash, such as a red shirt against a grassy green court. Unnaturally even lighting and a crowd made up of flat, poorly animated sprites do VT2 no favours in terms of delivering the sort of eye candy that it could.

On the up side, Virtua Tennis 2 features superb player animation. Everything from the way the players turn through to the realistic manner in which they prepare their shots, swing and follow through looks spot on. Shadows from clouds passing in front of the sun also add a touch of realism. All the action is portrayed at a high frame rate too, so keeping track of the action is an easy task.

The hit and miss visuals are backed up by a cast of 16 professional tennis players. There are eight male and

eight female players on offer. Something odd that anyone who played the old Dreamcast or arcade versions will notice is that former Aussie ring-in Helena Dokic has been replaced by Ai Sugiyama because of licensing issues. Maybe one day we gamers will get a tennis game with all the top pros in one game, but we're not holding our breath.

Each player has a specialty such as a strong forehand, fast running speed or a good serve volley game. There's no corny visual effects to highlight these abilities, but it becomes clear that these players have an edge when they execute their shot of choice.

Virtua Tennis 2 is one of those games that proves that a simplistic control set-up doesn't result in an inherent lack of depth. With just three buttons for topspin, backspin and lob, VT2 empowers the player with pretty much every imaginable stroke you could play on a real court. Hitting the ball cross court effectively is made easier by good positioning and giving yourself time to take the shot. Preparation pays off, just as it does in real life.

Those that played the original Virtua Tennis and were put off by the players' urge to dive for any shot that was at a stretch can rest assured that Hitmaker addressed the issue. Now players only dive for the shots that are otherwise impossible to reach.

There are three modes of play in Virtua Tennis 2. Exhibition mode provides the standard one off match scenario, and Tournament mode provides a series of five progressively tougher matches to play through. These two modes will barely get a look in, with World Circuit mode providing the career-style mode that gives Virtua

ROLL CALL

Virtua Tennis 2 may not have all the top players, but there's a healthy slice of talent to choose from. As with most sports games, some players look more like their real life counterparts than others. The following are examples of Pat Rafter and Venus Williams.



TRIPPED OUT TRAINING

To improve your male and female players in the World Circuit mode there are eight training events which provide a means to improve their stats.



PIN CRASHER
AMF would be pissed if this became a reality. It's just like 10 pin bowling, except the pins are set up in the service box, and the aim is to clean them out in two serves.



DISC SHOOTER
Anyone who's played the old board game Othello will recognize this immediately. Requires total control to flip all the discs to white in 10 shots.



PRIZE SNIPER
A bizarre cross between a sushi train and a shooting gallery. The aim is to knock as many prizes off the train in 10 serves to score enough points to improve your stats.



ALIEN FORCE
This is what happens when an old Space Invaders machine and a tennis ball machine get drunk and have a love child. Ball machines advance like space invaders, firing balls to be volleyed back at them.



BULL'S EYE
A straight forward target practice exercise where volleying the ball onto a bull's eye painted onto the court earns the player points, with a time limit to reach a certain score.



DANGER FLAGS
Something like a game of dodgeball, with vindictive ball machines firing at the player as they try to run about collecting five flags off the court. Fun, yes. Sensible, no.



TANK ATTACK
A slogging match with a pair of tanks at the other end of the court that need to be repeatedly smacked with tennis balls enough times within a certain time limit.



STOMP MAN
An odd one. The aim is to crush a whole mess of cans on the ground by stomping on them. In between playing shots against a wall. It's okay, OPS2 don't recall doing this with our tennis coach either.



HITTING THE BALL CROSS COURT EFFECTIVELY IS MADE EASIER BY GOOD POSITIONING. PREPARATION PAYS OFF.

Tennis 2 all it's long term appeal.

On the World Circuit, the player creates a male and female player to develop individually. After choosing a home site, the player has eight training activities to choose from, each concentrating on certain elements of their game. Everything the two players do wears down their basic energy level whether it be train or enter a tournament. This introduces the same sorts of considerations the real pros have to make, such as when to train hard or when to take a break so they're not run down before an important event.

The training exercises are about as serious as a game of miniature golf, but provide some genuine variety, something a lot of sports games lazily fail to feature. It's the tournaments that matter though, as it's through these that the player's characters can advance in ranking, and earn cash to spend on new rackets, gear and partners (for the court, not love interests). Getting into the top rankings in the world is no mean feat, due not only to the time taken, but also the cheap AI that kicks in with the tougher opponents. Rather than play a smart game, these adversaries pull off low percentage winners with ease, forcing the player to become



Inhumanly skillful to remain competitive. It does provide a serious challenge, but having the computer adjust to the player's game would have been more satisfying.

Other than the AI cop out, the only other thing to gripe about with Virtua Tennis 2 is the odd limitation of only being able to play one set in a match. The average gamer might find a single set enough, but it's not something tennis fans will be forced to swallow.

It may have a few niggling issues, but without a fundamental flaw, and with the most intuitive and engrossing representation of the classic racket sport, Virtua Tennis 2 is an ace on the first service. **□ Dan Toose**

VIRTUA TENNIS 2

Why we'd buy it:

- Plays beautifully
- Awesome World Circuit mode
- Works well as a multiplayer game

Why we'd leave it:

- Suffers from aliasing issues
- No different to the old Dreamcast version
- AI gets progressively cheaper

Graphics	A lazy port resulted in lacklustre looks	06
Sound	Music is poor, but basic sound effects are fine	07
Gameplay	Intuitive controls. Immediately playable. Brilliant.	09
Life span	Reaching the top rankings is an enjoyable epic task	09

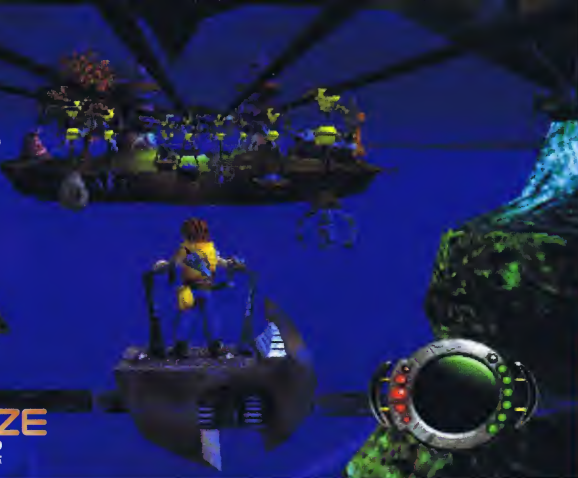
Virtua Tennis 2 is a bundle of sumptuous sports gaming that outshines its competition by being so utterly playable.

OFFICIAL VERDICT



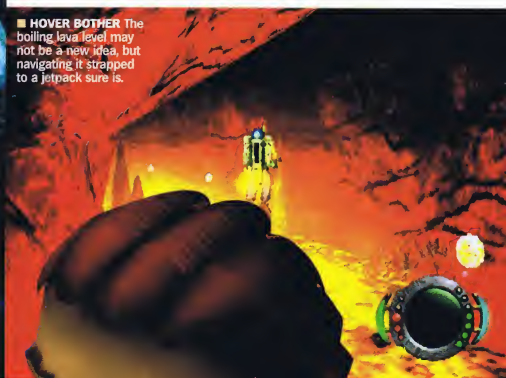
■ ISLAND HOPPING

Just travelling from one area of Haven to the next is a game in itself.



BRONZE
PlayStation 2
PlayStation 2 Online Edition

■ **HOVER BOTHER** The boiling lava level may not be a new idea, but navigating it strapped to a jetpack sure is.



HAVEN: CALL OF THE KING

The ambitious Haven is not just a place on Earth.

PUBLISHER: MIDWAY
DEVELOPER: TRAVELLER'S TALES
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.HAVEN.MIDWAY.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: YES
SURROUND SOUND: NO

■ BACK STORY

Since its creation in 1989, Traveller's Tales has worked on platforms including SNES, Atari ST, Sega MegaDrive and PSone to create games like *Sanic 3D*, *A Bug's Life* and *Muppet Race Mania*. Its first PS2 title saw TT tackling *Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex* after Naughty Dog opted to work on the epic *Jak And Daxter* instead. Now, TT is back with this free-roaming platform adventure.



This is the third game in what, for PS2, is a relatively box-fresh sub-genre – the epic, story-driven platformer. Defining characteristics? Huge vistas, a plucky hero with an oddball sidekick, a huge destiny to fulfill, an evil nemesis, no load times and a variety of gameplay styles. *Jak & Daxter* kicked the show off in style. *Ratchet & Clank* upped the ante just last issue. So if *Haven* can't be first, it sure as hell wants to be 'most' and this shows in the game's torrent of ideas and features.

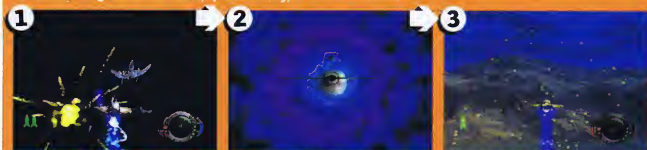
Every game like this requires you to collect scores of gems, trinkets, orbs, tropical fruit, etc. But here, there's added urgency to the hoarding as *Haven*, your hero, is infected with a virus that will kill him if he doesn't take the antidote, katana. Fall to top him up, and he'll die. Then there are globules of energy that not only power your shield, but also charge up mechanisms like hell-lines to unreachable areas, even a forcefield sphere for hamster-like transport. You'll find yourself coveting cogs, keys, stones, hearts, laser icons and feathers before long. Why feathers? Well, collect enough of these at the right time and you can call on *Haven*'s buddy, a mechanical bird called *Talon*, to help you out in a variety of ways.

TRAVEL FROM A PLANET'S ORBIT DOWN TO INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS ON THE SURFACE IN ONE SEAMLESS FLIGHT

HOW TO...

...GO PLANET HOPPING

The latter stages of *Haven* are, quite literally, out of this world.



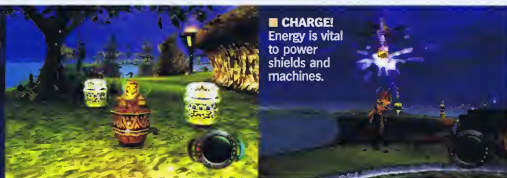
1. Shoot the energy homing to dust in true *Starfighter* style. You need the energy they leave in their debris.

2. Collect enough of this energy and choose the planet you want to visit. Then it's warp time!

3. You're now free to phase down to the planet's surface – all the way from orbit to terra firma with no loading times.



HERO WORSHIP? He may look like a reject from *Pop Idol* but Haven is a genuine platforming hero: Likeable, gutsy and thick as two planks.



CHARGE! Energy is vital to power shields and machines.



KICKING OFF The further you progress in *Haven*, the more you become a target for Lord Vetch's laser-wielding minions. They're on foot here, but in spaceships later on.

EAT MY GENRE!

Haven makes a big point of stressing its blend of many gameplay styles in one oil-embracing adventure. But what does this mean you are going to be able to do?



RACE! On land and by sea, you can get behind the controls and race several types of fantasy vehicle. Win various objects – sometimes even the vehicle itself.



THINK! *Haven* will really rev up your head in this collapsing maze puzzle, each step you take makes more stones fall away. How will you get across safely?



SHOOT! If you don't like using your brain, you can always rely on meaty shooting. The gun-assisted monorial ride will have you pounding your firing thumb to a pulp.



SHOOT! (SOME MORE) Are wave upon wave of deadly enemies out for your blood while a stadium audience roars? Then you've stumbled on one of *Haven*'s fights to the death.



FLY! Gliders and jetpacks are just the beginning of *Haven*'s flying fun. Before you know it, you'll be battling fighters in space and warping around from planet to planet.



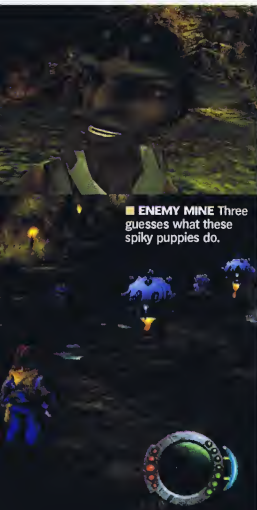
JUMP! Oh, and don't forget, *Haven* is a platformer too. Objects to collect, energy to maintain, ledges to leap from – you may be too exhausted to notice...

WHO'S CALLING?

A brief introduction to *Haven*'s story...

Titular hero Haven is a member of a race of people enslaved by an ugly bruiser who goes by the name Lord Vetch. It is said that this downtrodden people can be liberated when a mystical bell called The Golden Voice is rung, awakening a hero. But nobody knows where this bell is located. Haven, however, has been having strange dreams. Dreams in which he hears a voice: It would appear that his destiny holds more than just a life of servitude in Lord Vetch's mines.

HIGH BROW Some characters help, some try to make your life sheer hell.



ENEMY MINE Three guesses what these spiky puppies do.

The invention doesn't stop there. *Crash Bandicoot* had crates stuffed with goodies, as did *Jak & Daxter*. *Haven* has pots. And how. Bomb pots, spiky pots, flaming pots, weapon pots, shielded pots, locked pots and acid pots. Then how about pots that can only be broken with the help of a tiny blue fire dragon that you have to track down and lure with the glow of your energy shield? Or the innocent-looking pot-bots that sprout legs and start shooting? And, believe it or not, that's not all of them.

CALLING THE SHOTS

This delirious, 'everything but the kitchen sink' approach is found throughout the game, from five variations of temporary laser power-up for Haven's weapon (the yo-yo-like Mag-Ball) to the impressive tally of gameplay types on offer. Yes, *Haven*'s soul is that of a true platformer hero, but that doesn't stop him moonlighting as a race driver, puzzle noddler, shoot-'em-up grunt, space pilot and arena gladiator (see Eat My Genre!) *Traveler's Tales* is justifiably proud of its new graphics engine. It's not often a single sitting with a game can take you from a sea battle to an aerial dogfight via a meaty session of trad platforming. Busy? You have no idea.

And there lies the reason why, for all its inventiveness and kit bag of tempting goodies, *Haven* fails to surpass its two most immediate peers to claim the top perch on the PS2 platforming tree. Technically, the game's scope is impressive, and there are many individual elements that are charming and thrilling in equal amounts. From tiny details (a pendulum platform that requires Haven to shift his weight to access a higher area) to huge revelations (the first time you realise you can fly a spaceship from a planet's orbit down to buzz individual buildings on its surface in one seamless flight) there's a lot to like.

But *Haven*'s ideas are just so densely packed that inevitably perhaps, the overall flow of the game and its story can't help but suffer a little in the long run. It's the same reason why some tasks feel inspired and nicely paced, while others outstay their welcome. For the sake of a little judicious pruning, *Haven* could have been even more by trying to encompass just a little less.

This applies graphically, too. There are touches in this adventure that will soften even the hardest gamer: a shadow cast from the wings of a glider flying towards

the sunset, the teeming carpet of scarab beetles spilling out of a plinth in the Chamber of Doom, the lava coursing through Mount Firash. But then you have Haven's double jump that looks and feels woolly, a camera that can be a little sluggish in tight corners, and 'no go' areas that provoke a familiar sinking, 'invisible wall' feeling. It's not as if these are fatal flaws, but at the quality end of the platformer spectrum (where *Haven* belongs) they should be unnecessary.

The bottom line? Despite the criticisms, *Haven* is an impressive and gratifyingly ambitious platformer. Not the PS2 barrel (or pot) smasher that it wants to be, but not far off. We get the feeling this isn't going to be the end of Haven's adventures – on the evidence of his first outing, we can't wait for what's in store. **Paul Fitzpatrick**

HAVEN: CALL OF THE KING

Why we'd buy it:

- One platformer is never enough
- Variety is the spice of life
- A meaty and challenging adventure awaits

Why we'd leave it:

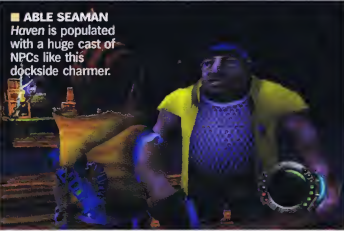
- One platformer is enough
- The quality of different sections does vary
- We'd prefer a master of one trade, not a Jack of all

Graphics	Mostly brilliant but patchy in places	08
Sound	Stirring score, solid sound effects	06
Gameplay	Varied, enjoyable, sometimes frustrating	08
Life span	It's a big game with plenty to do	08

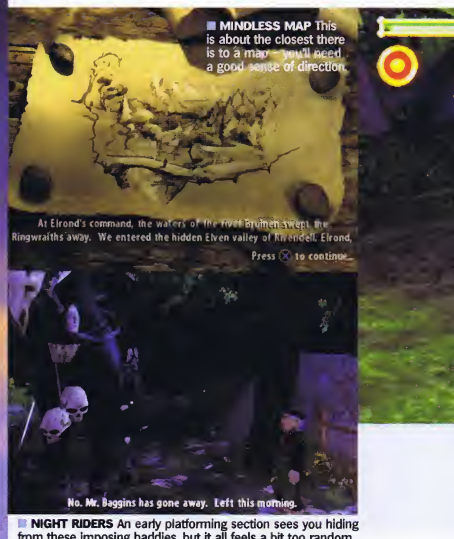
Lots of fun and packed with brilliant ideas. Would be a landmark game, if not for the superior *Ratchet & Clank*.

08

OFFICIAL VERDICT



ABLE SEAMAN Haven is populated with a huge cast of NPCs like this dockside charmer.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

There are now two Lord of the Rings games on PS2. This is the one to avoid.

PUBLISHER: UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE (BLACK LABEL GAMES)
DEVELOPER: SURREAL SOFTWARE
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.LOTR.COM/INDEX.JSP
60HZ: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO

BACK STORY

Universal Interactive's Lord of the Rings game isn't to be confused with EA's The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (PS2#09, 8/10) which is based on the first two movies in Peter Jackson's trilogy. The Fellowship of the Ring has been developed under a separate licence entirely, and is based upon Tolkien's original writings – you know, the ones that started off the whole orcs 'n' goblins gig.

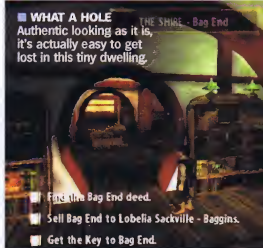


It's difficult to know where to start when describing a game that gets so many things so drastically wrong. There's no doubting the quality of the licence on which *The Fellowship of the Ring* is based – after all, Tolkien's original literary trilogy inspired the whole swords 'n' sorcery genre, and elements of his fantasy world-building vision inform the design of so many videogames today. Now that Peter Jackson's silver screen interpretation of that vision has been taken to heart as a definitive work by a whole new generation of Tolkienites, Universal Interactive was always going to have a tough time matching the dramatic impact of EA's movie-based *Lord of the Rings* game. But the failure to capitalise on the richness and popularity of such a lucrative licence goes way beyond just failing to match Hollywood.

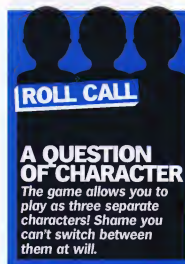
Perhaps it's best to begin at the beginning. It's obvious – from the lengthy cut-scene prologue in which the wise and powerful Gandalf informs the humble hobbit, Frodo Baggins, of the importance of the One Ring and sets him off on the start of his epic quest – that *The Fellowship of*

the Ring is going to be a disappointment. This introduction ought to be familiar to anyone who's read the books or seen the film. But it's not. Thanks to some insipid animation and flat voice acting, the doom-laden scene has been stripped of any of the dramatic tension that infused the original, and consequently, the game gets off to a dull and lifeless start. This is merely a sign of things to come.

Your first book-faithful task in the game is to take control of Frodo and find the deeds to his house (or hobbit hole) so that he can sell up and move on. But even this rudimentary task is made complicated. First of all, there's effectively no map. Second, there's no clue as to where the deed is located. Why wouldn't Frodo know where he'd hidden them in the first place? Third, due to a lack of variety in design, it's easy to lose your bearings despite the fact that the hole contains no more than six rooms. It's certainly not a difficult challenge, but it frustrates and shatters any suspension of disbelief. Unfortunately, this is fairly

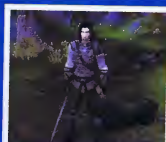


THE GAME CLOSELY FOLLOWS THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE BOOK BUT SEVERAL LIBERTIES HAVE BEEN TAKEN WITH THE TEXT



FRODO

During the early stages you get to play as Frodo. Jump, hit things with sticks, throw stones and use the One Ring for invisibility (don't use it too much or you'll give in to the will of Sauron).



ARAGORN

At the Prancing Pony Inn, you switch to Aragorn. You can hit things harder with a bigger sword but you can't jump. You can shoot arrows, but it's impossible to tell if you're actually hitting anything.

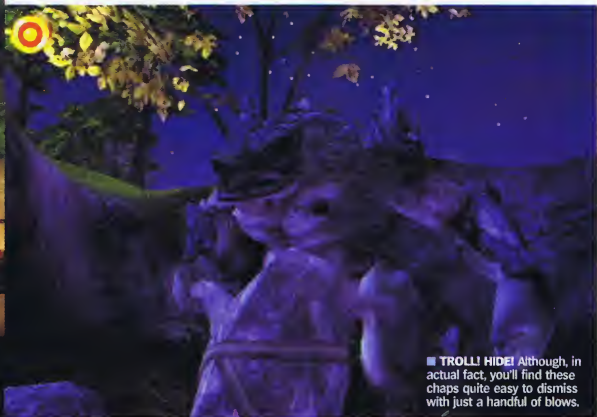


GANDALF

Finally, on the road to the Mines of Moria, you play as Gandalf. You still can't jump, but you can cast poorly depicted spells and hit things with a big sword (which seems a mile out of character).



LORD OF THE FLIES
 They're only spiders, but they're annoying if you're only three feet tall.



LUPINE HOWL
It only takes a few arrows to finish off the wolves.

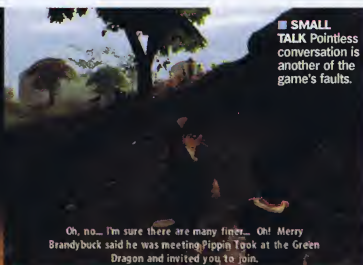
RING RING You might have to phone a friend to work out what you're doing.

✓ Complete: Find the Bag End deed.
/ Bag End Deed

TROLL! HIDE! Although, in actual fact, you'll find these chaps quite easy to dismiss with just a handful of blows.



GOT A LIGHT? Good job Aragorn has, since it's the best way of fending off those nasty Nazgûl.



SMALL TALK Pointless conversation is another of the game's faults.

Oh, no... I'm sure there are many finer... Oh! Merry Brandybuck said he was meeting Pippin Took at the Green Dragon and invited you to join.

typical of how the game goes on.

After getting off to this underwhelming start, the game continues to lurch from low point to low point. This basic structure of finding stuff without any clue as to its whereabouts persists throughout the game, which is essentially a third-person action affair with some unexciting combat, weak platforming elements and simple puzzles thrown in for good measure. After finding the deeds to Frodo's home, for example, you have to wander around the Shire, avoiding the Dark Riders by sneaking, hiding and throwing stones to distract them. Rather than allow the player to guide Frodo off to places that would be conducive to hiding, the poor midget is stuck in areas that leave him out in the open in a situation where being in line of sight of a black rider means game over. Surreal worked wonders with huge environments in *Drakan*, doing so again would have made a difference.

TRUE TO TOLKIEN?

What's more, the game is unlikely to keep Tolkien purists happy, despite the developer's claims that the game is more accurate than the films. Structurally, the game follows the geography of the book very closely, with Frodo's quest ranging from its start in the Shire through locations that will be familiar to fans, such as Bree, Rivendell and the Mines of Moria (home of the mighty Balin). But there are several omissions and one or two liberties taken with the original text – hardly a major flaw for the rest of us, but still, with so much to draw inspiration from, it seems unnecessary to have invented additional material.

You don't have to be a purist to see that the game is severely lacking in several other respects, too. After the early levels, third-person combat quickly joins aimless wandering in forming the heart of the game, but the action is random, rudimentary and, above all, boring. Cut-scenes are consistently lacklustre and uninteresting

throughout, and frequently wrench you out of the action with disorientating effect. Visually, the game isn't so bad, but there's a lack of richness and variety that introduces a sense of aimlessness and confusion to the most linear of levels. At least those that know the books inside out will be able to spot the fact that the flora and fauna is spot on, but it's a minor consolation.

If all *Surreal* were seeking to achieve was to deliver a game that was faithful to the Middle Earth mythos, then they've succeeded. If you're the kind of fantasy purist who was pissed off to see Liv Tyler cover for Glorfindel, then there's something here for you. However, if you're a gamer who is after an engrossing adventure that captures the spirit of the classic Tolkien tale, *The Fellowship of the Ring* will leave much to be desired. The smart thing to do would have been to concentrate on the interaction between the characters, or the strains put on them by the quest before them to inspire the emotive responses the book did. Instead they spent their time creating all these ludicrously inane missions that were never in the book. **David McCarthy**

LOTR: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

Why we'd buy it:

- Desperation or boredom
- To take pleasure in noting what the film left out

Why we'd leave it:

- There's already a better *Lord of the Rings* game available
- It fails to do any justice to the books it's based on

Graphics	Not ugly, but not pretty either, and very samey	06
Sound	Perpetual pan pipes soon start to grate	05
Gameplay	Some quests are fun, but most are banal	05
Life span	Only a dedicated few will stick with this to the end	05

It may have a lot of authentic Tolkien stuff on hand, but this game is fundamentally boring and a chore to play.

OFFICIAL VERDICT

HOW TO...

BEAT THE BOSS

Your very first boss encounter, with Old Man Willow, is comically ill-conceived. And to prove it, here's how to beat him.



After Old Man Willow has grabbed Merry and Pippin, you have to hit his trunk. This produces a cut-scene in which he squeezes the two hobbits even harder. And this is where things get confusing...



Hit him too many times in the trunk and he'll squeeze the hobbits to death, ending your game. Move around too much and you'll find yourself impaled on his roots, or crushed under his fists.



Here's the simple solution: Don't move after the cut-scene and keep hitting his fists (thanks to the poor animation, you probably won't realise you're hitting him, but you are) and you'll beat him.



STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

Prepare yourself for a cruel twist of Fett.

PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: LUCASARTS
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.LUCASARTS.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO

■ BACK STORY

Who is Jango Fett? Father of Boba Fett, Jango's parents were killed in a battle between rival mercenary armies – the Mandalore Warriors and the Death Watch. The orphan Fett was inducted into the Mandalore Warriors and spent many bloody years fighting for cash until he eventually became the group's leader. While fighting in the Galidraan system, the Mandalore Warriors were defeated by the Jedi Knights and Jango was captured and sold into slavery. After years in bondage, he later escaped to become a bounty hunter.



While new *Star Wars* games generate high levels of expectation and excitement, they are best approached with a healthy degree of scepticism. As gamers we've been hurt before.

Star Wars: Starfighter and *Jedi Starfighter* were slick shooters, but a tad repetitive. *Star Wars: Racer Revenge* captured the full-throttle action of pod racing, yet was too easy to complete. *Star Wars* games lure us in with movie-like production values and seduce us with familiar places (wow, Coruscant!) and faces (ooh, a Power Droid!). Then along comes the Jedi mind trick... "You will ignore the lightweight gameplay," whispers LucasArts with a wave of its giant corporate hand. "We will ignore the lightweight gameplay," we reply in a monotone and Force-manipulated daze...

Star Wars: Bounty Hunter is no different. Ahead of *Star Wars: Clone Wars*, *Bounty Hunter* is the first game to be inspired by the events and characters in *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones*. Set just after Episode I's climactic Battle of Naboo, a mysterious cult called the Bando Gora has begun attacking the Republic's many

industries. In response, the dramatically cowed Darth Sidious directs his apprentice Darth Tyranus to deal with the Bando Gora menace. Tyranus, formerly the Jedi Count Dooku, has also been tasked with finding a suitable specimen to act as a template for the Republic's clone army. By putting a huge bounty on the head of the Bando Gora leader, Tyranus hopes to kill two Wamp Rats with one stone – wiping out the cult and recruiting the resourceful bounty hunter that does so.

That bounty hunter is Jango Fett. Taking control of the fearsome Mandalore Warrior, you follow a central narrative spanning six story chapters and 18 levels of action adventure in pursuit of the Bando Gora leader. It's a quest that takes you from the city of Coruscant to the deserts of Tatooine, a trigger-happy tour of grimy industrial sectors and neon-lit bars, warehouses and giant meat-packing plants. This is the seedy underbelly of the *Star Wars* universe, a darkly-themed game completely lacking in shiny-bottomed starfighters and noble causes. There's some adventuring, of course, some door-opening and button-pushing, even some jumping.



■ **JET-SET JANGO** Using the jetpack in battle is a handy way of dodging gunfire.

MONEY SPINNER

Surprisingly, the bounty hunting part of *Star Wars: Bounty Hunter* is optional. But should you wish to earn cash for making the galaxy far, far away a safer place, here's how to go about it.



1 IDENTIFY

Only by switching to Jango's ID scanner can you sort the scum from the villainy. By moving the crosshair over a target you can see instantly whether there is a bounty on their head, how much it is and whether they need to be captured or killed.



2 MARK

Runaway criminals can't be captured or killed until you have marked them in the ID scanner. Once marked, they are helpfully illuminated by a green target box which helps ensure that you don't accidentally grenade or blast them in combat situations.



3 DEAD OR ALIVE?

Some bounties require targets to be captured alive rather than terminated with twin blasters, a thermal grenade or a guided missile. Jango Fett's Mandalorian battle armour features a wrist-mounted whip cord for precisely this purpose.



4 PAYMENT

Once captured or killed, the final part of the bounty hunting process involves running up to the target and claiming the reward. Any cash earned from successful captures or kills unlocks the bonus extras including Bounty Hunter trading cards and concept art.

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HIGH RISE The platform leaping often takes place over yawning chasms.

THE TALENTED MR. JANGO He can run, jump and crawl down small spaces.

PUZZLING Jango receives regular tips over the radio from his partner, Roz.



But for the most part, *Bounty Hunter* is basically a straightforward third-person shooter.

JINGLE JANGO

Like most one-man videogame armies, the anti-heroic Jango Fett comes suitably tooled-up. Twin blaster pistols are his weapon of choice and these can be auto-aimed at two targets simultaneously. A wrist-mounted dart gun, a gauntlet flamethrower and thermal grenades also come as standard, while additional weapons – a heavy gun, grenade launcher, sniper rifle and a blaster rifle – can be picked up at certain stages. As you'll face off against the Coruscant police force on one level and gangs of howling Tusken Raiders on another you need as many killing options as possible. An automatic target lock makes stylish gunplay effortlessly accessible.

And then there's the jetpack. This rocket-powered rucksack allows the bounty hunter to soar briefly into the air – it can't be used for continuous flying. While Jango can climb, hang from precarious ledges and burn through metal panels with a wrist-mounted cutting torch, the jetpack adds an extra platform element to the gameplay. Many of the levels can only be completed with jetpack-assisted platform leaping. On one of the grimmer Coruscant levels, floating containers move across a vast and yawning chasm, forcing Jango to boost across (and down) using them as metal platforms. Jango's ability to boost into the air during combat is also highly useful and guided or cluster missiles can be mounted on the jetpack for area-effect attacking.

Naturally, *Star Wars: Bounty Hunter* is a third-person shooter with a twist. But the twist (ie, the actual 'bounty hunting') doesn't play as big a part in the game as you might think. Although you are in pursuit of the Bando Gora, each level also

has a certain number of wanted aliens hidden amongst its cast of lowlife proles. Using Jango's ID scanner, you can identify these miscreants and kill or capture them for a cash reward. The process is often inconvenient. Switching to the ID scanner in battle leaves you vulnerable, and targets must be identified, then marked, then either blasted or bound. Yet missing these bounties doesn't affect your progress in the game.

So while there are bounties to claim and secrets to find, *Star Wars: Bounty Hunter* is limited. It's uber-stylized, of course, blessed with the extraordinary production values we've come to expect from LucasArts. Jango Fett actor Temuera Morrison provides the central voice-over, while original music sits seamlessly alongside excerpts from John Williams' *Episode II* score. Also on the plus side, the game features over 100 different characters, superb visuals (with very little slow-down) and neat boss encounters against fellow bounty hunters and aliens.

However, the longer you play *Bounty Hunter*, the less interesting it becomes. Jetpack-assisted platforming blends repetitively with the often mindless mayhem of combat. Poor visual signposting means that it's easy to get lost or wonder what the hell you're supposed to do next. In short: this *Star Wars* game looks the part, but there's less going on than there should be. **Dean Evans**

THE ACTUAL BOUNTY HUNTING DOESN'T PLAY AS BIG A PART IN THE GAME AS YOU THINK

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

Why we'd buy it:

- We're big *Star Wars* fans
- You play as Jango Fett. You have a jetpack...
- Superb production values, animation and design

Why we'd leave it:

- Shooting and platforming becomes repetitive
- Very little actual bounty hunting

Graphics	Superb dark, gritty atmosphere	9.5
Sound	<i>Star Wars</i> theme, laser blasts, good voice-acting	9.5
Gameplay	Exciting at first, but there's little variety	9.0
Life span	Can be completed in a weekend	6.5

A *Star Wars*-themed 3D shooter with some optional bounty hunting. Good mindless fun, but it promised more.

07

OFFICIAL VERDICT



DEVELOPER: VISUAL CONCEPTS
PUBLISHER: SEGA SPORTS
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$99.95
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE:
WWW.SEGASPORTS.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: YES
SURROUND SOUND: YES

■ BACK STORY
Sega have introduced yet another feature in its quest to topple EA Sports from the sports game throne. After creating a user account, players can request 2K3 to keep track of their win-loss record and overall success rate according to a number of stat categories. Players are then given a code which they can enter at Sega Sports' website to see how well they stack up against players from around the world.

NFL 2K3

Players will be brining out all the fancy post-touchdown celebrations after playing this brilliant football title.



NFL 2K versus Madden NFL is the gaming equivalent of a Super Bowl showdown. When these two sporting franchise giants go head to head, all that's usually left standing in the aftermath is a wonky goal post and a mountain of deflated astroturf. Although American football struggles to compete with local codes, anyone who ignores a game this good can't describe themselves as a sports fan.

Like Madden, NFL 2K3 features the typical play modes, full stat-tracking and all the presentation bells and whistles. Where it differs from its rival is in the all-important gameplay department. Put simply, the gameplay is so solid and realistic NFL 2K3 could serve as a NFL training simulator. Although the game caters to all tastes, players who prefer bitterly fought battles and hard won victories will opt for NFL 2K3, while those who enjoy scoring touchdowns will gravitate towards Madden.

Players who like to repeatedly run pet plays will find no joy in NFL 2K3. Run and pass coverage is extremely advanced and the AI is sophisticated enough to recognise if players fall into a familiar pattern and organise defensive plays to counter accordingly.

Novice players might be immediately put off by the pass-and-catch mechanics which are more fiddly than in Madden. However, with this vital area mastered, players will begin to appreciate the game's subtleties and realise that, just like in real life, timing is crucial. When to throw the ball and whether to throw a spiralling loop or a bullet pass capable of wrenching a receiver's arm from his socket can turn the tide of a game.

NFL 2K3's physics and animation needs to be seen to be believed. Players will watch with jaws agape as runners bounce off tackles, contort their bodies through defensive lines, stiff arm opponents, and stumble over the goal line. The player models are so well animated that

players will find themselves cringing with every helmet-jarring tackle. The imaginary ringing in the ears won't subside for days.

Graphically, NFL 2K3 looks a little underdone. The player models are chunky and look even less impressive on the close camera angles. That said, the replays are a joy to watch and make the player even more impressed with their handwork. Unlike big John Madden, who tends to be dull and repetitive, the commentary is smart and snappy and full of interesting player and statistical tidbits. Fantastic crowd sounds and ambient effects make the player feel like they're sitting at centrefield on Super Bowl Sunday.

Whilst it might not have the big name branding (although 2K3 has acquired the ESPN licence from Konami), Sega are headed straight for the endzone with NFL 2K3. The bulletproof AI and gameplay means that stopping an opposing team on 4th and Goal is just as satisfying as scoring a touchdown off a kick return. Whilst it may lack all the extra features and unlockable goodies featured in Madden, no other game compares when it comes to pure gameplay. ☐ Derek Lee



RUN THAT BY ME AGAIN

Casual players who don't understand the complexities of an NFL playbook are not left out in the cold. They can either sharpen their skills in the helpful Practice mode or learn as they go via the helpful in-game diagrams which clearly depict receivers, passing and rushing routes, and defensive patterns. Although the play names may sound like a lot of mumbo-jumbo to American football neophytes, the clearly organised playbooks mean it won't take long for players to figure out their offense and defence.



NFL 2K3

Why we'd buy it:

- Ultra-realistic football sim experience
- Outstanding level of detail in all the animation
- Intuitive playbook

Why we'd leave it:

- Steep learning curve with complex pass mechanics
- Slower pace than in arcade rhels
- No unlockable bonuses

Graphics

Toy figurine-like players but excellent action replays **08**

Sound

No annoying commentary from John Madden **08**

Gameplay

Clever AI means rewarding single player game **09**

Life span

All the play modes but lacking a bit in the extras **08**

Any diehard league, union or AFL fan will find it hard to ignore this near-perfect example of football gaming brilliance.

09

OFFICIAL VERDICT



SILVER
PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL LICENSED PRODUCT



1 **TRACY MCGRADY**
■ **EMBARRASSED?** "Why'd my folks give me a girl's name?"



■ **CRYSTAL CLEAR** Neither the backboard or the frame obscure the action



■ **DUNK-CAM** Play the camera operator who has to sit put here



■ **MASCOT MUNCH-OUT** Did the bull eat the Warriors' coach?



■ **ATHLETIC ACCESSORIES** Headbands, tats, you name it.

NBA 2K3

OPS2 reckon that MJ came out of retirement (again) just so he could feature in this backboard-shattering hoops title.

DEVELOPER: VISUAL CONCEPTS
PUBLISHER: SEGA SPORTS
PLAYERS: 1-6
PRICE: \$99.95
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.SEGASPORTS.COM
GIZM: MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: YES
SURROUND SOUND: YES
PERIPHERALS: MULTITAP

■ **BACK STORY**
While Aussie gamers might not know it, this is the fourth instalment in the NBA 2K series. The original first appeared on the now defunct Dreamcast. This franchise, together with the American football version, has really helped Sega Sports challenge EA Sports for video game sports supremacy.



Using a basketball analogy, NBA 2K3 is the workmanlike role player to NBA Live's flashier superstar. The former does all the dirty work, hustling all over the court, collecting rebounds, and setting picks, while all the recognition is reserved for the latter. This year, though, NBA 2K3 looks like busting out of its teammate's shadow and getting its name on the MVP trophy. NBA 2K3's exceptionally refined and balanced AI makes for an extremely challenging and rewarding single player experience. Superhuman stats and blowout scores which players might have experienced with the Live series are simply non-existent here. Scores hover around the 100-point mark and team shooting percentage stays around 50%, just like a real NBA game.

More experienced hoops gamers will also appreciate the many nuances in gameplay which all combine to make NBA 2K3 such a realistic sim. Pick players will always roll to the basket or drop back for an open shot, and the AI will always exploit a mismatch and pass out of a double team. On the defensive end, the AI is smart enough to blow right past if players mark their man too closely, or nail jumper after jumper if players back off too much.

A variety of play modes ensures that players won't be getting bored any time soon. The franchise mode is one of the deepest in the genre. Drafting rookies, trading veterans, developing new talent, and managing payrolls and injury lists are all part of the game. Add a sophisticated scrimmage mode where teams can run through set plays, and the player will feel like the coach/GM/scouting director of a real NBA team all rolled into one.

At first glance, NBA 2K3 might look graphically inferior to Live 2003. Apart from distinctive tattoos and hairstyles, it's difficult to see a likeness between the player models and their real life counterparts. However, the fluid and realistic animation of the player models is really where 2K3 takes it to the rim over Live 2003.

Players adjust their shots in mid-air and jostle for

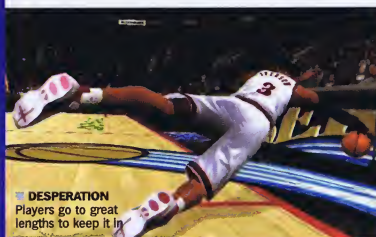
position under the bucket, while lightning quick guards stutter step and crossover past hapless defenders. One thing which could have been improved is transition play. Switches in camera angles and players frequently juggling passes tend to stymie fast break opportunities.

The sound is equally impressive, particularly the In-game commentary which is perfectly in sync with the on-court action. The colour commentary is insightful, helpfully analysing team strategy and player performance, rather than simply being comprised of inane chatter. Environmental effects from the dynamically animated crowd, buzzers, sirens, and pre-game introductions round off the brilliant experience.

It might have taken a while to arrive, but the wait has definitely been worth it. NBA 2K3 dominates the opposition in the same way that Kobe and T-Mac regularly do. Players brought up on EA's brand of uninspiring basketball should check out a game which emphasises substance over style for the most realistic, challenging and enjoyable basketball sim going around. □ **Derek Lee**

BRICK CITY

One feature which players will immediately notice about NBA 2K3's gameplay is the different method of shooting free throws. Unlike NBA Live and other games which have been using the inappropriate and simplistic T-meter for years, 2K3 makes good use of the controllers' analogue sticks. When at the charity stripe, players will have to delicately manoeuvre the two sticks simultaneously to direct two arrows into the basket. It takes some getting used to but proves to be more challenging and fits better with the gaming experience.



■ **DESPERATION**
Players go to great lengths to keep it in



NBA 2K3

Why we'd buy it:

- Excellent TV style presentation with the new ESPN licence
- Silly smooth realistic animation
- Sophisticated AI provides challenging gameplay

Why we'd leave it:

- You're a NBA Live diehard
- Fast break feeds may dislike the slower tempo
- You prefer flamboyant arcade over realistic sim

Graphics	Generic player models, exceptional animation	03
Sound	Excellent commentary and environmental effects	03
Gameplay	Rock solid from basket to basket	03
Life span	Deep franchise mode and multiplayer	03

An even better experience than holding courtside seats and hobnobbing with celebrities at a Lakers home game.

09

OFFICIAL VERDICT



BRONZE
PlayStation 2

■ **WAND WARS**
Gratuitous stick
gesticulation ahoj.



■ **WAND GUARD**
"No Harry, it's not
a melee weapon."

■ **PRAC EXAM**
If only high school
chemistry was like this.

■ **HARRY'S HALL**
Surround sound
works wonders here.

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

The Howarts Express steams along for another year.

PUBLISHER:
ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER:
ELECTRONIC ARTS
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE:
HARRYPOTTER.EA.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: YES



■ **WAND ENVY** Size matters?



■ **TOP HEAVY**
Not an earthquake
shelter...





The Boy Who Lived is one of the biggest kids phenomena the world has ever seen. Our bespectacled little mate is everywhere, from lunchboxes to action figures and lightning bolt underwear. Harry's so popular that his first PS2 adventure would sell by the truckload whatever EA decided to churn out.

Fortunately, this isn't the usual licensed rubbish cynically designed to separate parents from their cash. There's a lot of Harry Potter magic here, and it's a charming game that will leave kids in a spell.

Locations like Hogwarts, Diagon Alley and the Burrows have been lovingly crafted and are a joy to explore. The visuals don't set any benchmarks, but are rich and detailed. The moment you get a Nimbus 2000 and are able to fly high above the imposing Hogwarts castle is absolutely thrilling.


There's a good range of puzzles, quests, mini-games, battles and platforming action. Players get to hurl grumpy garden gnomes, run errands through the streets and shops of Diagon Alley, sneak through the Magical Menagerie, battle the grumpy Whomping Willow, duel against other students, contend with flying books in the library, wander around Hogwarts by day and night, and fight Aragog the spider and the terrible Basilisk.

Controls are smartly implemented. The  button is context sensitive and used for everything from opening doors to grabbing blocks, while players are able to assign the other three face buttons to any spell you wish.  is used to target opponents. Jumping is automatic, obviously designed to make the game easier. But it seems incongruous that Harry's health bar is often drained by missing a leap that is out of your control. Similarly, it gets frustrating being nabbed by prefects at night when you can't even see where they are.

The game is structured much like *Zelda: Ocarina of*

Time. But instead of dungeons, Harry attends classes where he embarks on a quest, with the reward of learning a new spell. In addition to the Filpendo for zapping opponents, eventually Harry is able to conjure light, tear ropes and rugs, repel spells back at an enemy, remove ectoplasm from objects and blocked doors, transform objects into birds, conjure flames and pick locks. It's great fun. You are free to explore and there are items to collect to encourage wandering about, but Ron and Hermione will always prompt you where to go next to move the story forward.

The main gripe is the loading times. As you move between areas in Hogwarts, you have to suffer a 10-second loading screen. It becomes very annoying and can spoil the atmosphere.

Hardcore gamers also won't be impressed by the short lifespan, relatively simple puzzles and linearity, but the game isn't for them. It's designed for kids, but is so engaging that the whole family might fall under its spell.  Jason Hill

HARRY POTTER: CHAMBER OF SECRETS

Why we'd buy it:

- Exciting battles and plenty of spells to unleash
- You can ride a broomstick and play Quidditch

Why we'd leave it:

- Loading times can annoy
- It's aimed at kids so isn't difficult
- You can't play practical jokes on classmates

Graphics	Lovely animation and a gigantic school to explore	08
Sound	Rousing score and excellent voice work	09
Gameplay	An engaging mix of battles, platforming and puzzles	08
Life span	Short but there's items to collect and side quests	06

Harry Potter fans will think it's wizard. Muggles might want to rent instead.

08

OFFICIAL VERDICT

■ BACK STORY

EA paid more than Australia's GDP for the lucrative Harry Potter licence. Their first game, *The Philosopher's Stone*, received solid reviews and big sales on PSone. The Chamber of Secrets is being released on seven different formats but only the GameCube, Xbox and PS2 versions are the same.

■ BROOM BABY!

Quidditch, that strange flying basketball-like game for wizards and witches, is one of the highlights of the game. A specialist team worked solely on Quidditch, and it proves a lot of fun. Harry plays the Seeker, which involves chasing the Golden Snitch and trying to grab it when you're close. The Snitch leaves behind a trail of rings to fly through, which increase your speed. You can zoom around at a great pace, and press the boost button to go even faster after whizzing through a set number of rings. You can even fly outside the stadium to enjoy the gorgeous green, rolling pastures. Just watch out for the fearsome Bludger!



■ **HARRY'S HIGH**
Jokes aside, the
flying scenes rock.



■ **POTTING WITH POTTER**
Gardening mini-game?



MINISTRY
Magazine **Australia**

WANT MORE FUN IN YOUR LIFE?

ISSUE 2 OUT NOW!
WITH FREE SUNKISSED CHILLOUT CD

REVIEW

SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY



SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY

One of PSone's biggest stars returns. Re-enter the dragon...

PUBLISHER: UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: EQUINOXE DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.UNIVERSALINTERACTIVE.COM
50HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

■ **EVIL** This is the guy who's stolen all the dragonflies.



■ BACK STORY

Created by Insomniac Games (recently responsible for current PS2 platform king, Ratchet & Clank), Spyro made his debut on PSone back in 1998. His ties with Crash Bandicoot were as apparent as the friendly rivalry between Insomniac and Naughty Dog (Crash's creator). And whereas Crash was always the platform figurehead, in truth Spyro was always on a par quality wise.



Some games will be around forever. Games like Gran Turismo, Tekken and Grand Theft Auto absorb whatever extra processing power a new console may offer and use it to enhance the driving, fighting or driving and fighting experience. They become, in a word, immortal. And then there are the games which flourish on one system, but fail to make the technical step-up to the next. Games like Crash Bandicoot and... Spyro.

Abandoned by the masters who originally crafted them (Naughty Dog and Insomniac, respectively) these games are now being fostered by new and less caring parents. Close your eyes because the results are akin to watching a prize fighter slog his guts out long after he should have retired.

The plot, never a strong point of any platformer, once again features stolen items (in this instance, dragonflies) which have been littered throughout a mystical world. So Spyro, now older, bigger, ganglier and armed with a few new flavours of breath attack, must jump, glide, scorch and scurry through garish lands, completing tasks to retrieve them. Such tasks, some of which are timed, include rounding up cows in a UFO, taking out armoured vehicles in a tank and mowing down piggy Chinese rickshaw drivers.

In addition to Spyro's staple flame attack, he can now spew out ice, electricity and bubbles – the latter has been specifically added to catch the rogue dragonflies. The dragonflies, however, are unhappy at being fly-napped and are increasingly tricky to catch. They can often spend a whole level floating just out of reach, blowing raspberries and taunting you. It's frustrating to the point where you wonder if you can really be bothered. But catch them you must, because

dragonflies also act as currency and enable you to move on to new levels. We say 'new', but 'new' is little more than a lick of paint, sadly peeling in places and exposing the true age of the game engine.

If you're a fan of the original Spyro titles – and we are – then you'll know exactly what to expect here and will be able to get to grips with the action straight away. If, however, you're expecting this PS2 Spyro to have made a flashy next-generation leap forwards, you're going to be disappointed. Of course, it could be described as one for 'da kids', but the trickiness of some of the controls makes even this label questionable.

Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly is by no means a poor game, but it feels old and reheated. The original creators of the purple dragon have gone on to make Ratchet & Clank, having taken Spyro as far as they believed he could go. Compare the two games and it's easy to support their decision. □ Lou Wells

SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY

Why we'd buy it:

- We loved Spyro's previous PSone adventures
- Loads of challenging 'new' levels to plunder

Why we'd leave it:

- Adds nothing significant to the series
- Contains the same old faults – pop-up, erratic cameras...
- Painfully long loading times

Graphics	Bright and jolly, but hardly next-gen	05
Sound	Upbeat tunes chip away at your sanity	05
Gameplay	Love or loathe it, it's still the same game	06
Life span	Lots to do, but can you be arsed again?	06

Spyro was cute as a kid, but has turned into an ugly adult. What worked before is light years from what we demand now.

06

OFFICIAL VERDICT

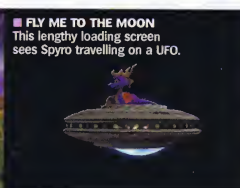
DOING IT BETTER



RATCHET & CLANK

(PS2 #09 9/10)

Having flogged its Spyro The Dragon series to within an inch of its natural life, Insomniac Games has raised the platform adventure bar to new heights with Ratchet & Clank. The distinct cartoon styling remains, but R&C takes full advantage of PS2's power with gloriously detailed intergalactic locations, fluid animation and a whole host of moves, guns and gadgets. Working with an old game engine, Equinox could only take the new Spyro so far. And it's not far enough.



■ **FLY ME TO THE MOON**
 This lengthy loading screen sees Spyro travelling on a UFO.

■ **BOVINE MADNESS**
 In this mission you must transport cows via spaceship. MooFO.



the **Getaway**

"Greed! Guns! Girls! Finally someone gets the formula right!"

SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT Presents A TEAM SOHO Production "THE GETAWAY" Starring DON KEMBRY RICKY HARDS ANNA EDWARDS MICHAEL PRESTON JOE RICE
Directors of Programming WILLIAM BURDON and NARESH HIRANI Director of Animation GAVIN MOORE Art Direction SAM COATES and RAVINDER SINGH
Production Design SIMON WOOD Written by BRENDAN McNAMARA and KATIE ELLWOOD Original Score ANDREW HALE Game Design CHUN WAH KONG Directed by BRENDAN McNAMARA

www.thegetaway.co.uk



PlayStation 2
THE THIRD PLACE



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WILTRON KSP5446



■ **SAVE THE PLANET**
Never mind the colonists,
who'll clean up the air?



■ **INSPIRATION?** Is it just us or does the ship look like Buck Rogers' starfighter?



■ **WAR OF THE WORLDS** Martian landscapes straight from a sci-fi flick.

DEFENDER

An eighties arcade classic gets a shiny new remake

PUBLISHER: MIDWAY
DEVELOPER: SEVEN STUDIOS
PRICE: \$59.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.MIDWAY.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO
PERIPHERALS: NO

■ BACK STORY

Defender was an arcade phenomenon when it was released in 1980, rubbing shoulders with games such as Space Invaders and Galaga as one of the pioneering arcade shooters. It has featured in a couple of arcade compilations on various systems through the years, but this is the first true remake of the game on any platform.



Kids these days have it easy when it comes to electronic games. Advances like cel shading and pre-rendered 3D environments are commonplace. They don't understand how far things have come from the Jurassic days of Pong and its '80s arcade ilk. One of the superior twenty cent munchers from those halcyon times was Defender, a game distinguished by its deeper-than-usual premise (the fact you had to shoot aliens and rescue space colonists) and its ground breaking 'scrolling' technology.

Well, many years have passed and games have moved on but Midway has proven that sometimes simple premises can be mined for gold again and again. Welcome to Defender - 2002 style! Human beings have colonised much of the known galaxy but wouldn't you know it, our intergalactic Imperialism has stuck in the collective craws of the Mantis, a race of intelligent, gigantic insects. You must pilot the Defender, an advanced interstellar warship, and wipe out the aliens, save the colonists and ensure that good ol' Homo Sapiens keep on spreading across the Universe like a virus with shoes.

The game itself involves you swooping into zones of alien infestation and performing a variety of tasks such as defending mining operations, burning nests of Mantises and saving colonists. This latter task is possibly the most enjoyable as the sight of your comrades dangling off your wings is quite delightful. Like the original you often have to catch these hapless characters before they splatter all over the ground, a task much more difficult in three rather than two dimensions, but due to the forgiving nature of the gameplay this ends up being a joy rather than a chore.

Defender is by no means a deep game. Despite the fact that the graphics have advanced from 2D blips and

blobs to delectable 3D eye-candy does not change the fact that this is essentially a brainless shooter. The good news is that it's almost an astonishing amount of fun. A fact greatly aided by the simple gameplay, huge and colourful environments and the subversive Starship Troopers-esque sense of humour the between level sequences often betray. The enemies are suitably varied and goofy looking and the number of ships and weapons you can use and upgrade is more than adequate.

On the downside the shallow nature of the exercise doesn't lend the title any real staying power. You won't be spending fevered, sweaty-palmed months trying to get through this one. Some of the missions, quite impressively, feature different paths but essentially these are slight variations on a very linear product. Regardless, Defender is one of the few pioneering arcade games to actually make a respectable comeback, rather than feebly cry, "Remember me?" □ Anthony O'Connor

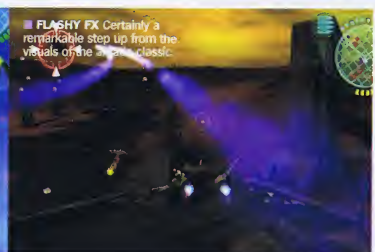


BUDGET AIR TRAVEL

One of the great joys of Defender is swooping down and catching falling or stranded colonists. They grab onto your wings and dangle there precariously until you can deposit them into a safe zone. And you thought economy class was rough!



■ **FLASHY FX** Certainly a remarkable step up from the visuals of the original classic.



DEFENDER

Why we'd buy it:

- It's a remake of the arcade classic, Defender!
- Has a co-operative mode.
- Actually has some character and charm

Why we'd leave it:

- It's a remake of the arcade classic, Defender.
- Won't be quite as appealing for those who missed the original.

Graphics

Smooth, colourful and very fast.

07

Sound

Impressive soundscapes and funny dialogue.

08

Gameplay

A joy to play. Simple and addictive.

09

Life span

Not long but very replayable.

07

It's the eighties Defender with a millennial face lift. Bucket loads of fast-paced, goofy arcade fun.

07

OFFICIAL VERDICT



■ MCFLYING MACHINE The DeLorean looks straight out of *Back to the Future*. Unfortunately it doesn't fly.



■ SMASHING DRIVE Driving on broken glass is bad for the tyres.



■ TAXI! This vehicle is like no cab we've ever ridden in [thank God].



WRECKLESS: THE YAKUZA MISSIONS

Reduce Hong Kong to rubble in this chaotic Crazy Taxi clone.



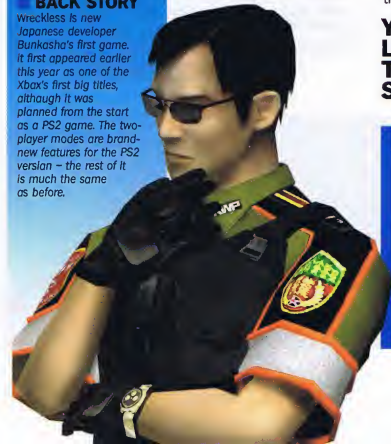
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: BUNKASHA
PRICE: \$59.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.ACTIVISION.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO



■ JOYRIDE Not every resident of the city sees the funny side to your recklessness.

BACK STORY

Wreckless is new Japanese developer Bunkasha's first game. It first appeared earlier this year as one of the Xbox's first big titles, although it was planned from the start as a PS2 game. The two-player modes are brand-new features for the PS2 version – the rest of it is much the same as before.



Reckon *GTIII* is about as destructive as driving games get? Well you can't have seen *Wreckless*, the Xbox conversion that puts you in the heart of Hong Kong's congested street maze and encourages you to smash almost everything into shards of glass and rubble.

It's thoroughly ridiculous and a lot of fun. You can play as either a pair of Hong Kong cops on the trail of the Yakuza, or as a bumbling secret agent duo with a slightly different set of Yakuza-busting missions. Whichever scenario you choose, the gameplay essentially remains the same – bust up a certain speeding vehicle, destroy various targets or deliver a precious cargo (while flattering as many things as you can along the way).

Completing the main mission objective is only half of it. There are gold medals to be won which can unlock cheats, bonus levels or extra vehicles, and the only way to win the medals is by achieving the secondary objective – breaking stuff. You might be required to crash into a specific quota of other road users, or destroy vast numbers of roadside objects as you thrash your way through the brief, intense levels.

Despite all the graphical extravagance, it's fast and smooth. Although the cars don't crumple quite as effectively as they did in the Xbox version, the environmental destruction seems just as impressive. However, there is a new addition for PS2 which comes in the form of two-player bonus games. Unusually, there's

YOUR MEATY MISSILE LAUNCHER BRINGS JUSTICE TO YAKUZA BOSSES AND BUS SHELTERS ALIKE

no split-screen to accommodate the extra player, so versus missions are tailored to a cat-and-mouse format in which the action restarts each time the gap between your two vehicles becomes too much for the camera to cope with. It's an novel idea, but the play can get very confusing, as the action rarely lasts more than a few seconds between restarts. Co-operative missions fare better, but obviously lack the competitive factor.

So the two-player modes don't add much to *Wreckless*, but when you're in the thick of a solo mission, with chunks of scenery fluttering around like steel confetti and your meaty missile launcher is bringing justice to Yakuza bosses and bus shelters alike, your friends won't mind waiting their turn. *Wreckless* is almost as good to watch as it is to play – not the kind of recommendation we'd usually make but, in this case, we'll make an exception. **□ Martin Kitts**

WRECKLESS: THE YAKUZA MISSIONS

Why we'd buy it:

- Non-stop destructive mayhem
- Instant appeal
- Worth playing through to unlock extras

Why we'd leave it:

- Lacks depth
- Two-player modes aren't great

Graphics	Loads of cars and innocent things to smash	97
Sound	Action movie themes, plenty of loud explosions	96
Gameplay	The cars handle as well as most racing games	97
Life span	Replay missions to unlock secrets and cheats	97

A pick-up-and-play experience that's great in half-hour bursts. Ideal for a quick, brainless blast late on a Friday night.

07 OFFICIAL VERDICT

TWO'S A CROWD

The two-player games are like *Micro Machines* in 3D, with just the one screen for both players.



In *Speedy Bus*, you have to clear a path for the bomb-rigged coach driven by your friend. If it drops below a certain speed, it explodes.

Free Chase sees you hurtling around trying to force the other player off the edge of the screen. Which usually happens very quickly.

Capture the Flag by hitting your opponent, then deliver it to your base. Without getting lost off the side of the screen? Impossible.

REVIEW

JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE

ASTON THRILLER The driving sections provide a break from the leg work.



ONE-MAN ARMY A castle, you say? Lots of guards, you say? It's no problem for 007.



GADGETS Laser watches, a car that transforms into a submarine and many more.



JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE

He may have been '34' for forty years, but 007 still has his charms.

PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-4
OUT: NOW
WEB SITE: WWW.EA.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: YES

BACK STORY

Having snapped up the 007 licence back in 1997, this is EA's fifth Bond game. Development duties have once again been handed by Derby-based Eurocom, and it's arguably the best EA Bond to date, with different ideas taken from many of the movies.

No, 007: Nightfire has nothing to do with the recent James Bond flick Die Another Day, but it's an officially licensed game (complete with Pierce Brosnan's face) which captures the thrills and spills of a Bond movie very nicely, right from the cinematic opening level and Intro. The gameplay is a mix of vision and action, primarily in first-person perspective, but there's a lot of variety including driving/shooting levels plus underwater and sniping missions.

007: Nightfire sees everyone's favourite English spy battling Rafael Drake, a criminal mastermind masquerading as a legitimate businessman. Bond has to investigate Drake's plans and then stop them, taking him through 12 levels from the Austrian Alps to underwater in the South Pacific, and finally in to space on an orbiting nuclear weapons platform.

As you would expect, there are plenty of beautiful women who appear either to help Bond out or try and kill him, and Alura, an Australian secret agent, is one of the main 'babes'. The Q department at M16 has been busy, and Bond carries an impressive array of gadgets including a laser watch, micro-camera, electronic lock decryptor, thermal vision glasses and suitcase-minigun. There's often many ways to accomplish a level - you can choose stealth, go in firing, or use tricks and gadgets to get through.

The driving sections were developed by EA's Need For Speed team and rev-heads will be pleased that some levels feature the all-new Aston Martin V12 Vanquish. Combat-ready with missiles and machine-guns thrown in, it's fast, furious and a lot of fun. The only issue here is that the driving levels are very easy. The first person levels are generally excellent, with the only quibble being the patchy enemy AI - sometimes smart, sometimes real dumb.

There are three levels of difficulty for the single player game, and good performances (fast time, high number of enemies' subdued/killed etc) will earn you

a medal and unlock gadget/weapon upgrades and new multiplayer modes and characters. There are a total of 13 multiplayer games including old favourites such as King of the Hill, Capture the Flag and Team Arena, as well as Assassination and Industrial Espionage missions.

Nightfire's multiplayer game features many familiar characters from the Bond universe, including Jaws, Oddjob, Goldfinger, Scaramanga, Xenia Onatopp, May Day and, of course, Pussy Galore. The deathmatch rules are highly customisable; you can throw AI controlled bots into the action and players can be handicapped for ranges in skill level. The specially designed maps are all great and include a deserted ski resort, Fort Knox, a missile silo and ravine where you can ride cable cars between opposing cliff-top bases.

007: Nightfire should please far more than just Bond tragiocs. Of course, if you're a fan of the British super-agent you should be tossing aside your shaken-not-stirred Martini to get your hands on a copy of this game. **Stuart Clarke**

JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE

Why we'd buy it:

- Bond action - excellent in both single player and multiplayer
- It will certainly give you a lot more than two hours of fun

Why we'd leave it:

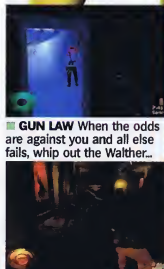
- If you're not a Bond fan, there are many other alternatives
- You don't like first-person perspective games and deathmatching

Graphics	Stylish and cinematic visuals while still playing fast	03
Sound	You'll be hearing lots of the Bond theme!	03
Gameplay	It's AI at times, but leads to see and do	03
Life span	You only sold play once, but multiplayer is forever	03

A highly enjoyable cinematic romp in the Bond universe, with great multiplayer options that should give it legs.

08

OFFICIAL VERDICT



GUN LAW When the odds are against you and all else fails, whip out the Walther...

THE GAME'S BOND

It wouldn't be a 007 movie game without those three essential ingredients we've come to expect from Her Majesty's finest secret agent...



GUNS Fire a rocket and the screen flips seamlessly into a first-person view, allowing you to guide it to its target.

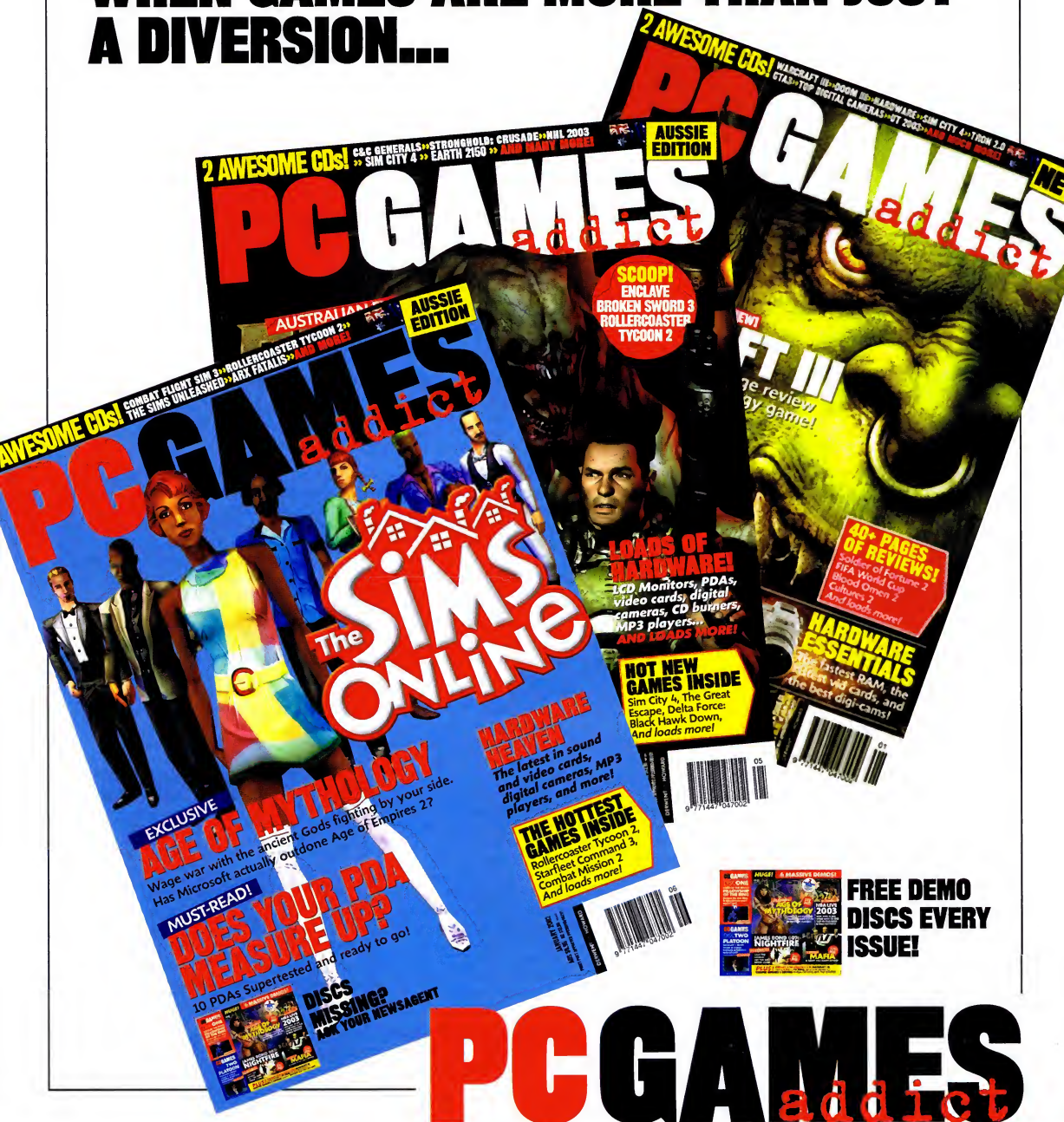


GIRLS A party packed with lovely ladies? A chance for lecherous old Bond to go into innuendo overdrive...



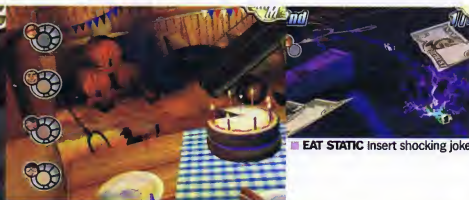
GADGETS The trusty old laser watch gets yet another outing useful for destroying the things that guns and explosives can't.

WHEN GAMES ARE MORE THAN JUST A DIVERSION...



PC GAMES addict

For gamers who aren't ashamed to admit they're hooked.
IN YOUR NEWSAGENT NOW



PUBLISHER: INFOGRAMES
DEVELOPER: SHEFFIELD HOUSE
PRICE: \$69.95
PLAYERS: 1-4
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.MICROMACHINES-GAMES.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO
PERIPHERALS: MULTITAP

BACK STORY
Micromachines has enjoyed a strange little cult audience, having charmed the punts off gamers for years on a variety of platforms. This is the first time Infogrames Sheffield House have worked on a Micromachines title, and is their second PS2 game, with Superman: Shadow of Apokollos.



MICROMACHINES

You know what they say... Small car, big gameplay.

Swing a cat these days and you're likely to hit a driving game on PS2. There is now a glut of motorised entertainment on the black box so it would really take a distinctive title to stand out in the crowd. For many gamers *Micromachines* will be that title.

Comparing *Micromachines* to something like *Colin MacRae Rally 3* is obviously ludicrous, but in their own ways they are both masters of their genre. *MacRae* is arguably the King of the realistic rally game and *Micromachines* takes the title for best "goofy racer" game. The idea of a bunch of tiny, matchbox vehicles racing around a track may not seem like a great deal of fun for those that haven't experienced its delights in years gone by, but that's where *Micromachines* really surprises.

The game itself doesn't differ greatly from other *Micromachine* releases over the years. It features the same frantic racing over bizarre terrain. So what has improved in this latest incarnation?

The first thing you'll notice are the graphics. They're superb. Colourful, rich and seamless. Even though the cars are tiny they are all imbued with distinctive personalities and talents. The Frankenstein racer is an obvious example, with his Addams Family-esque look and feel. The puny cars' physics too, are a treat. They act and react in ways that seem appropriate for a shrunken race situation.

Even more impressive than the diminutive vehicles, however, are the tracks. This is where the attention to detail of *Micromachine's* creators can really be seen. What other racing game could boast a beach side track including a hill climbed by a fat, naked, sleeping man? Or perhaps the chalk outline track is more to your taste, featuring pools of blood and inquisitive rats that tower

above you. In fact some of the tracks are so creative and detailed you'll find yourself distracted into flying off a cliff. The multiplayer modes are also fun. Although frantically trying to get a screen ahead of your mates can lead to heated arguments and lost friendships.

On the downside this is basically just a remake of the other *Micromachine* titles. There's not much in the way of evolutionary leaps here. Players hoping for some unique twist on the genre may be a little disappointed. Also the over-the-head perspective may distract some *Micromachines* newcomers at first, but it's worth getting used to and will soon seem like second nature.

With a range of vehicles, characters, weapons, unlockable tracks and modes it's hard not to like *Micromachines*. It's fun either on your own or with others and is a worthy purchase for anyone needing a break from ultra-realistic racers. **Anthony O'Connor**

MICROMACHINES

Why we'd buy it:

- We liked the other Micro Machines games
- We want a break from ultra-realism
- It's easy to pick up and get into

Why we'd leave it:

- Same old game with updated visuals
- We take racing games VERY seriously
- It's a little simple and limited

Graphics	Colourful, slick and detailed. A joy to behold.	07
Sound	Limited but funny. The racer's are hilarious.	06
Gameplay	A little too simple but ridiculously addictive.	07
Life span	The kind of game you'll pull out again and again	07

Micromachines is simplistic fun from woe to go. It oozes charm and is incredibly addictive.

08

OFFICIAL VERDICT

RIGHT ON TRACK

The tracks in *Micromachines* are very impressive indeed. Ranging from a bloody chalk outline, a mad Professor's lab, through to a naked guy in a bathtub each track will have you laughing and cursing in equal measure.



TAUNTER

WOLFE
HOLMES
and
HARRIS
present
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and
HARRIS

MILITARY MACHINES CAN'T KILL HIM, MILITARY APATHY WILL.

BRIAN LIES HAVE BEEN KILLED BY THE MILITARY. VIA ENERGY BY TOP. HE'S BEEN KILLED. WOULD STILL, HE'S BEEN KILLED.

BRIAN WILD AND KILLED IN VOLGA

VISIBOMB

IT'S NOT
WEAPONS TH

IT'S WHO TH



SWINGSHOT

JUST THE
AT ARE SCARY

Y BELONG TO

IT'S NOT JUST THE WEAPONS THAT ARE SCARY

IT'S WHO THEY BELONG TO



Introducing Ratchet and Clank, a deadly duo sent to save the universe from total destruction. Help them blast their way through an epic array of environments armed with the biggest weapons arsenal in the galaxy. Heaven forbid.

www.ratchetandclankgadgets.com

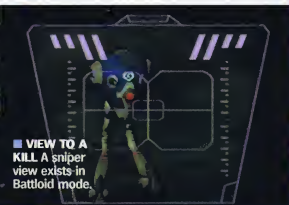
THE CRAZY PLACE THE EXCITING PLACE THE THIRD PLACE PlayStation 2

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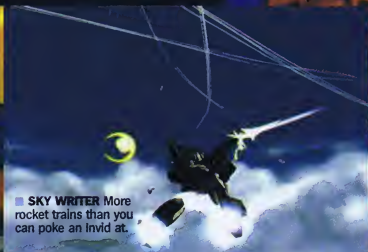
ULTIMA KSP5449



■ **VIEW TO A KILL** A sniper view exists in Battloid mode.



■ **GUARDIAN ANGEL** Veritech Guardian lets rip with a volley of guided missiles.



■ **SKY WRITER** More rocket trains than you can poke an invad at.



■ **MEAN STREETS** Macross city is rarely a safe place.

ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY

Quit your crying Macross fans, a real Robotech game has landed.



There have been more than a few Robotech titles released through the years, but fans of the most endearing anime series of the '80s have learned to live with disappointment.

Now, almost twenty years since the series was first released, fans can finally get their hands on something that actually bears some sort of resemblance to Harmony Gold's animated space opera.

Robotech: Battlecry tells the tale of the Zentradi Invasion, where, Robotech saga began. Rather than be totally predictable and throw the player into the fray as Rick Hunter, developers Vicious Cycle have chosen to tell the tale from the perspective of an all new character, Jack Archer.

As the name would imply, Battlecry is a combat game first and foremost, and in many respects it delivers authentic Robotech action. The Veritechs can transform freely between their three modes — Fighter (plane), Battloid (robot) and Guardian (half-way transformation). Each mode has its advantages and disadvantages, but all of them have a common problem with maneuverability. It makes sense to have a wide turning circle when flying around in Fighter mode, but turning around swiftly in Battloid mode is not an option, leaving what should be the most nimble of the modes a bit sluggish.

Both Guardian and Battloid modes allow the user to use jets to strafe and zip around, so it's not like dodging is impossible, it's just not as fluid or intuitive as it should be.

Battlecry joins the ever growing ranks of cel-shaded console games, and it's little surprise considering the subject matter is a cartoon. The familiar look of the visuals go a long way to making Battlecry feel totally authentic, with not only the Veritech fighters and Zentradi invaders looking spot on, but the environments that are faithful to the show as well. Unleashing a volley of guided

missiles will give fans of the series a wonderful nostalgia trip. However, déjà vu soon sets in after a few missions, as it becomes apparent that the same buildings and textures have been used throughout the game.

The official licensing has made itself apparent in the spoken dialogue and musical score, with the original voice actors being dusted off to deliver the many lines of dialogue reeled off throughout the game. It's the music that really makes the difference though, with Ulpio Minucci's work from the cartoon blaring throughout, although the looping of some bits of music could have been a little smoother.

There's plenty on offer in Robotech: Battlecry, with a huge horde of missions, extra Veritechs to unlock, and a token two-player battle mode. A greater range of mission objectives would have been welcome, as would tighter controls to give the player the feeling that they could zip around and pull off the sort of freakish moves that Rick Hunter and Mac Sterling did in the cartoons. But these quibbles don't spoil Battlecry from being the first decent Robotech title to see the light of day. □ Dan Toose



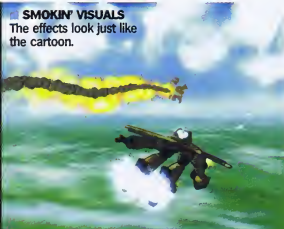
PUBLISHER: TDK
DEVELOPER: VICIOUS CYCLE
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.ROBOTECHGAME.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

■ BACK STORY

Other Robotech games in the past have proven to be a let down. Neither Macross VF-X & Macross VF-X 2 on PSone did the series any justice. A lot of disgruntled Robotech fans bought on N64 in the hopes that Robotech: Crystal Dreams would rock their world. It never even saw the light of day.



■ **FLY BOY** You can fly in any mode, not just as a fighter plane.



■ **SMOKIN' VISUALS** The effects look just like the cartoon.

ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY

Why we'd buy it:

- We watched every episode of Robotech when it first came out
- Authentic sound and visuals
- Tells the story from a new perspective

Why we'd leave it:

- Impossible to zip around the way we want to
- Needs more varied objectives

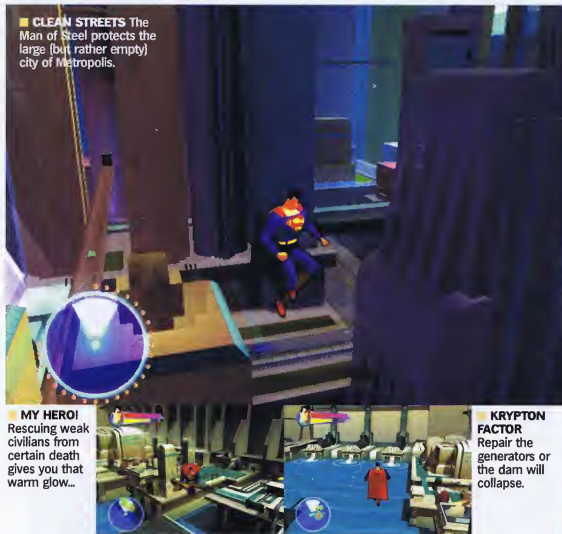
Graphics	Cel-shading gives it an authentic look	06
Sound	The right voice actors, the right music	06
Gameplay	Needs tighter controls and some variety	06
Life span	Much to do, but the 'samey' factor limit the appeal	07

An authentic audio visual anime experience, but sluggish controls hold it back from realising its true potential.

07

OFFICIAL VERDICT





■ CLEAN STREETS The Man of Steel protects the large (but rather empty) city of Metropolis.

■ MY HERO! Rescuing weak civilians from certain death gives you that warm glow...

■ KRYPTON FACTOR Repair the generators or the dam will collapse.



■ TO PROTECT AND SERVE Fight endless legions of Inter-Bots: Ho-hum.

Protect Lois and the Scientists!

■ HE'S BEHIND YOU Superman has X-ray and heat-ray vision, not eyes in the back of his head.

■ TURN ON, TOON IN Interspersed between the repetitive gameplay are some gorgeous animated cut-scenes.

SUPERMAN: SHADOW OF APOKOLIPS

Not quite the Man of Steel. More the Man of Stainless Steel...

PUBLISHER: INFOGRAMES
DEVELOPER: SHEFFIELD HOUSE
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE:
WWW.INFOGRAMES.CO.UK
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO



■ BACK STORY

Superman: Shadow of Apokolips has been developed by a chunk of Infogrames called Sheffield House. For those of you interested in videogame history, Sheffield House was formerly Gremlin Interactive, makers of Loaded and RC Racer on PSone. Old-school readers may remember the days of Actua Soccer. Even older readers may remember Monty Mole...




If we were to judge *Superman: Shadow of Apokolips* purely on the quality of its graphics, then we'd be lining up words like 'stunning', 'glorious' and possibly even 'fantastic' to describe it. With bold cel-shaded landscapes and pixel-perfect characterisation, Sheffield House has done an excellent job of recreating the slick comic book look of the Warner Bros cartoon. Sure, the animation is stiff at times. But this is the smallest of visual niggles in a cut-scene-crammed game that lets you fight for truth, justice and the American way as the legendary Man of Steel.

However, if we were to judge *Shadow of Apokolips* on the quality of its gameplay, we'd have to pack away the praise and fling words like 'frustrating' and 'lightweight' at the title instead. It's a shame, because this game certainly had bags of potential. Beautiful cut-scenes advance a plot that involves a shady deal between Lex Luthor and Darkseld, the self-styled lord of the hell-planet Apokolips. What follows is a series of mini 'events' spread across 15 large levels, involving rescuing cowering civilians from burning rooftops, finding and replacing generator fuel cells and destroying legions of advancing Inter-Bots (plus assorted gun emplacements, APCs and tanks). Typically, you complete these events in order and often against the clock, while all the action is underpinned by a suitably heroic orchestral score.

As Superman you have access to a range of super powers. Obviously you can leap tall buildings in a single bound, move faster than a speeding bullet and are generally reputed to be more powerful than a locomotive. In game terms, this means that Superman

can fly, ram objects at high speed, and pick up and throw large objects (such as the aforementioned APCs and tanks). In addition, you

can activate Superman's X-ray vision to see through walls and use his super-breath to move or freeze objects and enemies. Lastly, the heat rays that Superman can project from his eyes act as a devastating blast weapon. A target lock helps in frantic combat situations. A slow-moving, non-rotatable game camera doesn't.

Playing *Shadow of Apokolips* is frustrating, often to the point of joy-pod-throwing annoyance. Level objectives are poorly explained and you'll often fall an 'event' because the game doesn't make it clear what is going on or where you need to go. Superman's super-hearing is realised as a 2D radar screen, a poorly designed indicator considering that you are flying through large 3D levels. And the game is disappointingly repetitive – endless multiple enemy combat encounters are mixed with dull fetch-and-carry repair/rescue missions and strength-based tasks where you simply need to hammer the  button as fast as you can. Forget kryptonite – in the hands of games developers, all Superman's powers seem to ebb rapidly away. □ Dean Evans

SUPERMAN: SHADOW OF APOKOLIPS

Why we'd buy it:

- A playable extended episode of the classy TV toon
- Superb comic-book graphics

Why we'd leave it:

- Repetitive, all-too simplistic gameplay
- Fiddly and unresponsive control system
- Poor level signposting

Graphics

A perfect recreation of the WB cartoon

Sound

Voice-overs by the original cartoon cast

Gameplay

Repetitive fighting, fetching and button-bashing

Life span

15 levels, but no real urge to play them

Stunning graphics, but the gameplay makes Activision's *Spider-Man* game look like a work of genius.

05

OFFICIAL VERDICT

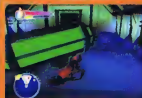
IS IT A BIRD?

Once you get used to the fiddly control system in *Shadow of Apokolips*, you'll find it's no master the quick activation of Superman's super-hero powers.



X-RAY VISION

Superman's ability to see through matter (unless it's made of lead) can only be activated in the First-person mode. Use it to locate trapped civilians or to see where enemy Inter-Bots are hiding.



SUPER STRENGTH

As he's more powerful than a locomotive, Superman can punch through metal, pick up heavy objects and take massive damage. Tossing tanks across a battlefield is great fun...



HEAT RAYS

Superman's heat ray is one of the most useful powers in the game. Keep the fire button pressed for a steady stream of blazing energy, or tap it rapidly to unleash a powerful cannon-style blast.

SHEFFIELD HOUSE HAS DONE AN EXCELLENT JOB OF RECREATING THE SLICK COMIC BOOK LOOK OF THE CARTOON

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Freerider MX, Motocross Magazine



Riptide Bodyboard Magazine



Slam Skateboard Magazine

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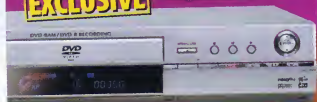
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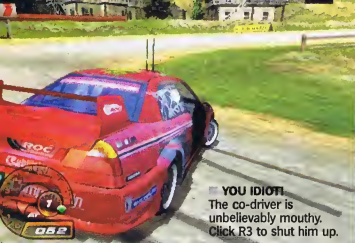
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YOU IDIOT!
The co-driver is unbelievably mouthy. Click R3 to shut him up.



REVIEW

RALLY FUSION: RACE OF CHAMPIONS/CRASHED



RALLY FUSION: RACE OF CHAMPIONS

Yet more dirt-based driving. Too much of a good thing, anyone?

X As if straight bananas and the metric system weren't enough, it now seems there's some kind of EU directive which states that every major publisher must have a rally game on its books. Activision's offering is pitched somewhere between the arcade action of *Shox* and the authentic simulation of *Colin McRae 3*. A half-way house then, in which you get a mixture of point-to-point and circuit-based racing, either against the clock or rival drivers.

The Race of Champions referred to in the title is a head-to-head tournament set in Gran Canaria. However, the meat of the game is in the Challenge mode. Here you'll find three difficulty levels, each comprising around 15 races. Quick Race mode features even more formats including Relay, Checkpoint, Hill Climb and Follow the Leader, in which each car has an energy bar that depletes at a varying rate, dependant on position. Climax has made a stab at innovation, but it doesn't really work.

Beyond Gran Canaria, the tracks are all fantasy locations such as Oceania, Desert Heat and Arcticia. They're all richly textured and genuinely imaginative,

with jumps, water hazards and even a mini-avalanche to contend with. Indeed, the third Inca track is so pretty it could easily be a spare set from *The Lord of the Rings* movie. Unfortunately, the driving model is a lot less satisfying than either *CMR3* or *WRC II*. There's noticeable under-steer and the cars are a little lightweight. Even though this is pitched at the arcade end of the spectrum, it's still galling that you come off worst after every crash. Ultimately, *Rally Fusion* finds itself outpaced by more illustrious rivals. **Tim Clark**

RALLY FUSION: RACE OF CHAMPIONS

Why we'd buy it:

- Bumper-to-bumper action

Why we'd leave it:

- Colin McRae Rally 3 is out this month

Graphics **06**

Sound **05**

Gameplay **07**

Life span **05**

This is by no means poor, but we can't recommend a hamburger when fillet steak costs the same.

06

OFFICIAL VERDICT

PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: CLIMAX
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: 15 NOVEMBER
WEBSITE: WWW.RALLYFUSION.CO.UK
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO



FIREWORK DISPLAY Each track features impressive spot effects and landmarks.



FLYING BUG Chances are, if you're in this position you're not going to be winning anything.



CRASH AND BURN Cars take damage with impressive realism. **SMASHING FUN** Free for alls can be quite a laugh with mates.



CUNNING STUNTS The game's stunt arenas look more entertaining than they are. Pity really.

CRASHED

Gentlemen, start your shunting.

X Inhabiting that happy game world where cars are fantasy weld-jobs and every nation boasts its own themed course or arena complete with climactic quirk, *Crashed* pits you against up to three mates and/or a gang of AI opponents in a series of challenges and vehicular deathmatches.

Don't be deceived by the cars with numbers on their sides - *Crashed* is not a racing game. It's a destruction derby minus the derby. It is, to put it another way, a primitive smash-'em-up whose only demand on gamers is that they have opposable thumbs to grip the *Dual Shock 2*. The modes range from a simple free-for-all in which damaging your opponent's bodywork equals points, to bus-leaping stunt arenas, variations on playground tag and Last Man Standing.

Praise is due for this attempt to add variety to the proceedings, and for a while, *Crashed* is genuinely fun in a way that only destroying muscle cars shunt by panel-denting shunt can be. The graphics help this instant

appeal along, too. The cars are sinewy monsters and take damage with impressive realism.

That said, this is not the kind of game that draws you in and nags at your subconscious until you've finished it. *Crashed* is most fun when played against a few mates, but if automotive destruction is your bag, *Twisted Metal: Black* with its weapons, power-ups and larger arenas is a much more satisfying experience. **Paul Fitzpatrick**

CRASHED

Why we'd buy it:

- We like to bash things good

- Undemanding fender bending

Why we'd leave it:

- It's really a one trick pony

- Too simple

Graphics **06**

Sound **05**

Gameplay **05**

Life span **04**

Initially enjoyable, but there's nothing to keep you coming back. A missed opportunity.

05

OFFICIAL VERDICT





■ **GUIDED RETICLE**
No chance of failing to spot the bad guys.

■ **OUT OF STYLE**
Once considered cutting-edge, now just rough edged.



■ **TARGET PRACTICE** Cutless targets don't shoot back.

VIRTUA COP ELITE

Virtua Cop 1 & 2 come to the PS2... why?

PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SEGA-AM2
PRICE: \$69.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: NA
GOLZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO
PERIPHERALS: G-CON 2



There was a time when *Virtua Cop* and its sequel ruled the arcades. They were frantic, entertaining games that added the dynamic targeting system to the somewhat tired lightgun mix. Very much like Murphey's POV in the movie *RoboCop*, your target would zoom in on the most dangerous enemy, flashing a warning red, and you'd put a number of caps in said enemy's arse before they could do the same. Indeed, *Virtua Cop* was King of the gun games in its day, but that day has long since passed.

If you were hoping that Sega would create a third VC game, utilising modern technology and next generation graphics, we have bad news. Instead we see a re-release of both *Virtua Cop* games on one disc with a few unlockable levels and... that's about it. It's truly bizarre because VC was starting to look dated about a year after it was released. Its thunder was well and truly stolen by *Time Crisis* and *Silent Scope*. And yet now on PS2, this package comes out and you may well find yourself scratching your head and asking why.

The graphics are faithful to the arcade, and thus very

bland. The sound is equally dated. The animation doesn't even come off as particularly fluid and the inclusion of a two-player versus mode is hardly going to make up for the fact this is a retro game that's largest distinction from today's lightgun games is its yesteryear visuals.

Perhaps there are still hardcore *Virtua Cop* fans out there who will find the sense of nostalgia compelling enough to make *Virtua Cop Elite* a worthwhile buy. However, for the rest of us looking for something fresh in the lightgun genre, the wait continues. □ **Anthony O'Connor**

VIRTUA COP ELITE

Why we'd buy it:

One of the few G-Con 2 games about.

Why we'd leave it:

We didn't get a PS2 to play old Sega Saturn games.

Graphics 05

Sound 04

Gameplay 03

Life span 03

A generic retro package that fails to impress at all. *Virtua Cop* had its moment in the sun. Avoid.

03

OFFICIAL VERDICT



REHASHED

The same on-rails levels are back.



■ **FIREPOWER** If only St George and his peers had dragon-performers like this



■ **HO HUMMEE**
Muddy coloured cars in muddy locations

■ **ROAD HOG**
The best way to deal with rush hour traffic.

REIGN OF FIRE

It's Humans vs. Dragons in this less than mythic movie conversion.



Reign of Fire, like the movie upon which it's based, tells the post apocalyptic tale of a world ravaged by dragons. Mankind has basically been reduced to a grotty rabble living in the smoking husks of their old world. It takes the square jawed heroism of "Dragon Slayer" Van Sant to inspire the survivors to take arms against the scaled oppressors and reclaim the planet as their own.

One of the most exciting features of *Reign of Fire* is the ability to play as either Dragon or Human. Such narrative freedom really shows the publisher of the game has actually spent time thinking about what would work rather than just cashing in on a film licence. Unfortunately, this is about the only good thing that can be said for the game. Whether you play as human or dragon the game features the same chunky animation, drab graphics, horrible camera angles, unintuitive controls and seemingly endless missions with objectives that are murky at best.

These problems are especially tangible in the Human

missions where you drive various vehicles and shoot at the dragons with your gun turrets. Fine in theory, but *ROF* features such an awkward control system that any progress you make is at the cost of much frustration and potential controller hurling. The Dragon missions are a little more fun but again sluggish and needlessly complex controls make burning the bipeds frustrating.

Like the movie, *Reign of Fire* is conceptually sound but has so many fundamental flaws that it fails to suspend disbelief. □ **Anthony O'Connor**

REIGN OF FIRE

Why we'd buy it:

The dragon missions are kind of fun.

Why we'd leave it:

It's a dull, repetitive and a frustrating experience.

Graphics 05

Sound 05

Gameplay 03

Life span 04

It could have breathed fire, but this game just blows smoke in your eyes.

05

OFFICIAL VERDICT

PUBLISHER: BAM! ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER: SPYGLASS
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.BAM4FUN.COM/
REIGNOFFIRE
GOLZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

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ALL THE EYE CANDY ANYONE
WITH A PENCHANT FOR
BIFFO OR BLACK OUTFITS
COULD HOPE FOR

Blade II

The plot's thin enough to cut an artery with, but *Blade II* is bloody good fun

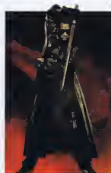
FILM: *Blade II* continues the neo-gothic vampire slaying adventures of the old Marvel comic character. To call this a vampire film would be misleading though, as this is an action film that simply happens to be populated with vampires. After relocating to Prague in an effort to search for his old companion Whistler (Kris Kristofferson), Blade (Wesley Snipes) is approached by the ruling body of the Vampire nation in the hope that he will help them eliminate a new strain of vampires, the 'Reapers'. This new breed feed on both vampires and humans, boasting powers rendering them immune to all the usual vampire weaknesses bar sunlight. Luke Goss shines as Nomak, the first Reaper, providing Blade with a genuinely daunting adversary.

The unlikely alliance sees Blade leading the 'Bloodpack', a team of vampires that had been training to kill him. The unusually idealistic vampire femme fatale Nyssa (Leonor Varela) provides a predictable love interest for Blade, while the rest of the vamps offer all the antagonism that such a scenario demands. Trust issues with Blade's human companions almost add more tension to the mix, but aren't developed enough to do so. Director Guillermo Del Toro should also be faulted for not capitalising on Prague's gothic 'vampire-friendly' architecture, shooting almost all of the film in dark underground locations that could belong to any old city.

It's easy to fault *Blade II* for its rather shallow plot, and those that were drawn to the first film's gradual introduction to this particular vampire mythos and backstory will miss them greatly. *Blade II* works on the basis that the viewer understands how things work thanks to the first film, and concentrates on delivering the action in spades rather than repeating itself. To continue to expect a deep plot and moving narrative from a comic book character whose forte is killing things would be naïve.

If over the top special effects and an entourage of carefully choreographed fight scenes sound entertaining, then *Blade II* will not disappoint. Snipes' martial arts skills are put to great use, and provide all the eye candy anyone with a penchant for biffy or black outfits could hope for. **8/10**

EXTRAS: An awesome array of goodies for anyone with an interest in putting together a modern day action film. The two commentary tracks are hilarious, with both taking cheap shots at the other. More stuff than you can poke a stake at. **9/10** □ DT



Director
Guillermo Del Toro
Starring
Wesley Snipes, Kris Kristofferson, Luke Goss, Leonor Varela, Ron Perlman, Norman Reedus
Distributor
Roadshow
Out Now
Price \$36.95
Extras 25 minutes of deleted scenes. Two commentary tracks, one with Del Toro and producer Peter Frankfurt, the other with Snipes and writer David Goyer.
Production Notebook: offers hours of insight into the CGI work, special effects, costume design, fight choreography, and more. **Isolated Score.**
Theatrical Press Kit
Music Video - Cypress Hill & Roni Size 'Child of the Wild West.'



TWIN BLADES

Those looking to scoop both *Blade* films at once can score the boxed set, which includes all the extras features for both films, at a price of \$59.95



WHEN WILL I BE BADASS?

Blade II may not deliver a relentless stream of surprises in terms of plot twists. However, here's a real surprise for anyone who remembers the nauseating '80s pop duo Bros. Luke Goss, one of the decidedly woosy boys stars as *Blade II*'s lead villain 'Nomak'. Goss went on to develop a reputation as a capable stage actor in the UK, and has only recently moved to film, with only one other film, *24-7*, to his name before landing his super-villain gig.

Anyone who plans on seeing the next *Tomb Raider* film will catch Goss again, as he's accepted a starring role opposite Angelina Jolie.



dvdreviews

Recommended viewing for your PlayStation 2 cinema system.

DVD CONTRIBUTORS: ANTHONY O'CONNOR, DAN TOOSE, LEE HART

LOTR: Fellowship of the Ring - Extended Ed.

Director Peter Jackson/Starring Elijah Wood, Ian McKellan, Sean Bean, Viggo Mortensen, Liv Ullmann, Orlando Bloom/Distributor Roadshow Entertainment/Out Now/Price \$74.95



FILM: We already gave the original DVD a 10/10, so this is purely a take on Peter Jackson's efforts to extend the already epic *The Fellowship of the Ring*. From an editing standpoint, this is a masterpiece, with around half of the scenes in the film being seamlessly extended in some way, as well as a few completely new scenes appearing in the mix.

In most cases, the extensions allow Jackson that extra moment required to tell Tolkien's tale just that little bit better. Of particular merit is Galadriel's gift-giving scene, which ensures that elements of the next two films will make much more sense. However, a few scenes such as the inclusion of the elve's exodus to the Grey Havens are simply too brief to make any sense to anyone who doesn't know the books well.

On the whole though, this is more of the same, and in that case, that can only be a good thing. **9/10**

EXTRAS: With four DVDs, there's more here than any fan of the movie could hope for. Four audio commentaries (director, cast, design and production team). Discs three and four contain six hours of making of features. Including adaptation from the books, to the vision of the film, through to making it a reality. Countless interviews, character info, pictures and other goodies flesh this out into a thorough package. The extras are all totally original too, making it worthwhile for rabid fans who bought the first release and want more, but are wary of spending money on something they already have. **10/10**

VERDICT: A bit pricey, but for those who are genuinely interested in film production or die-hard fans of Tolkien's work, this is an essential purchase, and well worth the money. **D**

DOMESTIC ISSUES
"Why do the orcs always leave the dusting to me?"

STUBBLE-MESSIER
"If only Galadriel gave me some shaving cream."

NOVICE "I know Bilbo, it's awfully heavy for a letter opener."

THE MONEY OR THE BOX?

For those that can't handle the idea of not having the complete Tolkien package...

Got a spare \$149.95 lying around? Well, if you have, you can grab yourself one of the 25,000 *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring - Collector's Edition* boxed sets. So what do you get for all that extra money? In addition to all the stuff from the Special Extended Edition, plus a National Geographic documentary DVD that looks into things like the connection between *Lord of the Rings* and WWII. Plus, a weighty set of bookends.



COMPENSATING?
"No wonder folks don't call you Big Willy no more"

Men In Black 2

Director Barry Sonnenfeld/Starring Will Smith, Tommy Lee Jones, Lori Lynn Fyfe/Distributor Columbia TriStar/Out Now/Price \$39.95



FILM: The original *Men In Black* managed to create a blockbuster that had cool creature effects and a decent plot. Kind of like *Ghostbusters*. *Men In Black 2*, unfortunately, does not live up to the expectations set by its predecessor: its slender plot does little to hide the fact the sequel is basically mining the original for laughs. The talking dog and "Worm aliens" that were so charming in *MIB* are now overused and quickly become annoying. Also Tommy Lee Jones' character doesn't really appear until the second act so the film mainly rests on Will Smith's shoulders. Never a good idea. **6/10**

EXTRAS: A two disc set with extra scenes, docos, goodies. **8/10**
VERDICT: *Men In Black 2* is a lot like *Ghostbusters 2*. A lacklustre sequel to a much better original. **D**



BIG AIR Was Dave Mirra a stunt double in early years?

ET The Extra Terrestrial

Director Steven Spielberg/Starring Henry Thomas, Drew Barrymore, Robert MacNaughton, Dee Wallace/Distributor Universal/Out Now/Price \$31.95



FILM: Twenty years after the stumpy alien first captured the hearts of millions of film-goers, Spielberg has re-edited and remastered his sentimental classic, adding a couple of extra scenes and replacing the at-times unconvincing ET puppet with CGI. The updates are unnecessary – especially swapping the guns wielded by the government agents at the end of the film for walkie-talkies – but don't detract from one of cinema's all-time greats. **10/10**

EXTRAS: A superb selection includes two documentaries tracing the genesis of the movie in minute detail. Plus a Spielberg Intro, a 20th Anniversary cast-director reunion and loads more. **8/10**
VERDICT: Part sci-fi, part nostalgic rumination on the importance of family, *ET* is still as magical as it ever was. **LH**



DVDS YOU MUST OWN THE BIG LEBOWSKI

Coen Brothers' films with a kidnapping heist twist may soon run into double figures, but when they're as funny as this, who cares? Bowling, a missing toe and a dirty rug all come together with coarse results that are complemented by sterling performances from both Jeff Bridges and John Goodman.

PS2 EGGSTRA

Hidden DVD treasures for your pleasure.



RESERVOIR DOGS

WHAT TREAT'S IN STORE? A 26-minute interview with Quentin Tarantino that was commissioned especially for the DVD release. Here the director/writer tells where he got his inspiration for the story, what films influenced it and where the title came from.

WHERE IS IT? At the Special Features menu highlight Quentin Tarantino and press 4. An ear will appear. Press Enter and you'll get to view the Intro.

SEND US YOUR EASTER EGGS

Spotted a DVD bonus, have you? Then drop us a line at OPS2@derwentward.com.au let us know where and how you found it.



Other DVDs to look for on the shelves this month include: *Scooby-Doo (The Movie)* starring Sarah-Michèle Gellar, shot here in Australia. John Cleese - *How to Irrigate People*, an ironic title

considering how it's most entertaining. The astonishingly popular 24 (Season 1) with Kiefer Sutherland and friends is already on DVD! Those who are digging the retro vibe since *City City* hit

can now grab *Pretty in Pink*, one of the Molly Ringwald line of '80s movies. Anime fans have the most reason to celebrate though with the Neon Genesis Evangelion - (8-Disc) Boxed Set finally getting a

local release, along with other top Japanese animation including *Cowboy Bepop* - (Volume 6), *Robotech - Macross Saga: Collections 1 & 2*, *Heising* - (Volumes 1 & 2), and most

noteworthy of all *Vampire Hunter D - Bloodlust*, arguably the best animated feature to hit our shores since *Spriggon* was released back in August. Look for a *Vampire Hunter D* review next month.

KEEP IT ON We really don't need to see this guy starkers



Naked

Director Mike Leigh/Starring David Thewlis, Lesley Sharp, Katrin Cartlidge/Distributor FilmFour/Out Now/Price \$29.95

FILM: *Naked* is the story of misanthropic drifter, Johnny, and his apocalyptically bleak misadventures through the seedier side of London. He meets, deconstructs and ultimately destroys everyone and everything he touches, then keeps moving on. This may not sound exactly like dynamic entertainment but Mike Leigh's film has just as much impact now as it did in 1993. The interesting characters, the simple score, the frequently improvised dialogue and the almost monochromatic cinematography combined with David Thewlis in his best role all combine to create one of most evocative and intense movie going experiences you're ever likely to have. **8/10**

EXTRAS: Few and far between. Basically a trailer and a short intro by Mike Leigh. **3/10**

VERDICT: An emotional sledgehammer of a film that stays with the viewer for a long time afterwards. ☐ A/C



TRES CUTE No witty jokes here, we just love Audrey Tautou "swoon"

Amélie

Director Jean-Pierre Jeunet/Cast Audrey Tautou, Matthieu Kassovitz/Distributor Magna Pacific/Out Now/Price \$32.95

FILM: From Jean-Pierre Jeunet, the director of the *Delicatessen* comes *Amélie*, a romantic comedy that puts Hollywood's efforts at the genre to shame. *Amélie* (Audrey Tautou) is a beautiful, yet shy and introverted 23 year old woman, with an overdeveloped imagination and a strong sense of justice. Her observant and caring nature lead her to surreptitiously go about helping others, while her chronic shyness prevents her from being able to help herself. Tautou's expressive face and infinite charms combined with Jeunet's knack for delivering humour with imagination prevent this tale from becoming cheesy or uncomfortable at any point. **9/10**

EXTRAS: Being a French film, the lack of subtitles for the extras (of which there are few) is tres disappointing. **4/10**

VERDICT: Beautifully shot, superbly acted and perfectly polished, *Amélie* is French art at its finest, losing nothing in the translation for anyone who's ever laughed or loved. ☐ DT



WHEN HIPPIES GET LOOSE "Away with ye soapdodging mutant!"

The Time Machine

Director Simon Wells/Starring Guy Pearce, Jeremy Irons, Samantha Mumba, Mark Addy/Distributor Warner Home Video/Out Now/Price \$TBA

FILM: HG Wells' timeless sci-fi parable of the class struggle (underground workers the Morlocks feasting on the idle rich Eloi) gets a mediocre update courtesy of his Grandson, Simon Wells. Guy Pearce tries hard as the Victorian era inventor who travels 800,000 years into the future and gets caught up in the evolutionary war. But with the story taking a back seat to more action and effects, there's little to distinguish this. Stick to the 1960 version unless you're the kind who demands cutting edge visuals with their sci-fi. **6/10**

EXTRAS: Four behind-the-scenes featurettes and a single pointless deleted scene, plus two commentaries, the best of which is by the enthusiastic director, Mr Wells. **6/10**

VERDICT: Reasonably entertaining but ultimately shallow, effects-heavy update of the HG Wells sci-fi classic. ☐ LH



The Secret Life of Us - Series 2

Directors Various/Starring Claudia Karvan, Samuel Johnson, Abi Tucker, Distributor Liberation/Out Now/Price \$34.95 [three sets for whole series]

FILM: The second season of *Secret Life* was a bit of a let down for fans of the original. The pace lagged, the characters started to whine a bit too often and the hipness of the early episodes began to betray some suspiciously soap opera tropes towards the end. Still, it has to be given credit as one of the most intelligent Aussie

television series' around, and the fact that it doesn't feature doctors or cops in small country towns can only be considered a blessing. Added to that a cast of young talents such as Abi Tucker, Claudia Karvan and Joel Edgerton and ultimately what you have is a more than worthy collection. **7/10**

EXTRAS: Only one doco. Disappointing for fans of the series who crave more. **2/10**

VERDICT: An Australian television drama that doesn't induce the cultural cringe. Nicely done. ☐ A/C



PEARCING "Joel, these OPS2 guys love me, twice on one page!"

The Hard Word

Director Scott Roberts/Starring Guy Pearce, Rachel Griffiths, Robert Taylor, Joel Edgerton/Distributor/Roadshow Entertainment/Out Now/Price \$36.95

FILM: The newest in a series of gritty Aussie crime capers that began with *Two Hands* and *Chopper*, *The Hard Word* is the quite engaging story of three brothers Dale, Mal and Shane. These rough and tough brethren seem to drift in and out of jail in their continuing search for the perfect score.

Their problem is that they're under the thumb of a crooked lawyer. Their solution? Rob the Melbourne Cup! Entertaining, if uneven, with solid performances from Rachel Griffiths, Joel Edgerton and Guy Pearce. **7/10**

EXTRAS: Some good extras including audio commentary, film clips and the excellent script by David Thrussell. **6/10**

VERDICT: A patchy script with too many loose ends aside, it's an above average homegrown gangster flick. ☐ A/C



FLIMSY That wall won't hold, you used too much fabric softer

Bend It Like Beckham

Director Gurinder Chohan/Starring Parminder K Nagra, Keira Knightley, Jonathan Rhys Meyers/Distributor Helkon SK/Out Now/Price \$33.95

FILM: Sadly not a sex instruction video by Posh Spice, but a football comedy taking in Posh angst, generational conflict and swerving free kicks. Asian teenage footy fanatic Jess (Parminder Nagra) dreams of becoming a professional player - an ambition slightly at odds with the expectations of her parents.

What follows is a kind of *East is East* culture clash comedy meets Gregory's Girl-style awkward romance. Predictable fare, but its upbeat tone is sure to put a smile on your face. **6/10**

EXTRAS: Commentary by Director Gurinder Chadha and Co-writer Paul Mayeda, ten deleted scenes and a decent Making Of where everyone is brimming with enthusiasm for the project. **6/10**

VERDICT: Likeable rom-com providing further evidence that girls simply can't play football (complaints to the usual address). ☐ LH

MILLA JOVOVICH

MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ

A secret experiment. A deadly virus. A fatal mistake.

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OF 15 MUST BE ACCOMPANIED
BY A PARENT OR ADULT GUARDIAN
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194796



postal

This month includes: the hardships of rural gamers, censorship beefs, and some critique...

THE LETTERS ARE FLOODING IN NOW SO KEEP THEM COMING! IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO ASK OR SAY, WRITE TO US AT OPS2@DERWENTHOWARD.COM.AU OR SEND SNAIL MAIL TO OPS2, DERWENT HOWARD PTY. LTD, PO BOX 1037, BONDI JUNCTION, NSW 1555. THE WINNER OF THE STAR LETTER EACH ISSUE GETS A GAME - A GOOD GAME - OF OUR CHOOSING. JUST REMEMBER: WE WANT INTELLIGENT, INFORMED LETTERS THAT DON'T ALL TALK ABOUT THE SAME THING. NO FLAMING, NO 'MY CONSOLE'S BETTER THAN YOURS' STUFF, NO 'WHEN IS GAME XXX OUT?' ETC. AND FOR MERCY'S SAKE, USE THE SPELLCHECKER IF YOU SEND YOUR LETTER BY EMAIL - THEN WE MIGHT, TOO. WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO TRUNCATE, HACK AND SLASH YOUR LETTER SEEMINGLY AT RANDOM.



STAR LETTER DIGITAL DROUGHT

I live in Temora, a small town with about 4,000 people in it, and we get no PS2 games whatsoever. We only have about two local video stores, and I guess it wouldn't hurt to ask the store owners when they'll get some games to hire in, but he has little success with obtaining them.

The closest place to get some decent games is Wagga Wagga, but that's an 80km car trip, and we rarely go there at all.

The newsagents failed to get some issues of the magazine in, and I missed out on some important information we could read and consider buying more games with. By the time I had gotten my first PS2 magazine, it was the fifth issue or so, so I missed out on some really good information on that as well, as well as many other people.

There's only about half a dozen people in Temora who have a PS2 who I know of anyway. This makes things a little bit hard on some people. Beings that I only have two games so far (FFX and Tekken Tag Tournament). I constantly have to borrow games from a friend, and this can prove somewhat frustrating to us. Daryl Noack via email

Perhaps Angela's plan (see 'Falling In Love Again' below) to subscribe would help you out as well. The mag would be mailed to you, rather than you having to find it, and you'd also be getting it much cheaper.

If you're looking to see what games you've missed out on, the Shortlist section does the job. Each month we now add in the games from the previous issue that received an oword, and cull off a few low scoring or outdated games. Thus, each month the list gets one step closer to being a reference to the best the PS2 has to offer.

Finally, if you can't find a local gaming store, keep in mind there are online gaming stores in Australia which mail orders out all the time. Some have conditions that allow you to return a game if it doesn't turn out to be what you were after. Check out the retailer sites listed on au.playstation.com or search the web and you should find a place no worries.

We'll get a game out to you while you're looking for the right place to shop.

CENSORSHIP ANGST

Sorry, but I am here to express anger. GTA:VC has been censored in Australia because there is no R18+ rating. In the UK and the US, the industry decides the ratings for games, but noooo, in Australia we have to do things differently by having the government decide the ratings.

I heard what has been banned/censored was a sex scene and a strip club. OPS2, is that all that has been done? Because if they have taken away weapons, that really makes me MAD!!! One more thing, if they take away the strip club, will they be replacing it with another building that can be entered? Is any of the gameplay taken away (eg. certain ways of killing people, stealing, or any other crime)?

This must make Rockstar North MAD as well. I heard they were reluctant to comment on the censorship, is that true?

Keep up the mags caldness, cyal

Dan the man via email

Rest assured that there won't be any weapons removed at all. The thing that

triggers the OFLC's killjoy spasms is when sex and violence are presented in combination to create a 'sex crime'. There are enough games available now that feature violence and gore in graphic detail to a level where we can fairly safely say that excessive violence alone won't stop a game from being released.

Be aware that the OFLC is just the entity that enforces the guidelines which are ultimately put in place by politicians. They're kind of like a jury in that they give a verdict based on the low, rather than their personal opinion. With most MPs being a generation gap or two away from the overage gamer, it's something they see as a non-consequential form of entertainment that they don't understand, and are harder on as a result. To them, being tough on video game censorship is a way to appear responsibly conservative to other voters who simply don't get gaming and believe what they're told about it.

And yes, it's true Rockstar were reluctant to comment on the

censorship [they simply declined to answer questions about this when we reviewed the game]. While frustrating for us, it makes sense, as it wasn't up to them to do the classification, and they wouldn't want to pre-empt a decision from the OFLC by highlighting an iffy scene, etc.

FALLING IN LOVE AGAIN

What can I say, Waw! Yesterday for the first time I bought your mag. I've had my PS2 for about a year now and was starting to get a bit disenchanted with it after purchasing a few really bad games. I have some good titles like Max Payne and Red Faction the latter I'm stuck on at the moment and have had heaps of fun on Vampire Night. I'm hooked on your mag now but will have to subscribe as I'm working in a small country town and our newsagent does not always stock your mag. It's nice to get an informed opinion on the games before I fork out a 100 bucks but I also learned a few things like you can link two PS2 together.

Thanks for opening my eyes to some of the possibilities.

Angela via email

That's what we're here for Angela. Especially at this end of the year, there's gobs of games coming out, and the number of options make things confusing. Hopefully our demo discs will help you know for sure whether or not a game is truly for you before you trek vast distances or order it. In They'll also help you get a feel for the different OPS2 team members when you play demos of the games we write about.

We also hope the upcoming online gaming developments will help you and other gamers in the country find more folks to game with than the local PS2 posse may provide.

SHAME ON YOU!

Strong words to start an e-mail I know, but strong deserving following your so called "Exclusive" review of GTA: Vice City.

I have always trusted that your magazine would bring the reader the inside news on such games, but it looks like you have been unable to resist the lure of the dollar - that getting a 'first' review brings - and have cobbled up an "exclusive" review that is nothing more than information from the Internet and press releases from Rockstar North and Sony.

Having received my copy of the UK last week, it is plainly obvious that your review was not based on the finished game or even an import copy as the

information and omissions in your review make this plain to see.

I believe that you should own up and apologise to your readers for misleading them this way and for selling your magazine under false pretences. I for one will cease to further purchase your magazine if you continue to insult the intelligence of your readers in this way.

Michael Pillay via email

We won't apologise for misleading anyone, because that simply wasn't the case. Not that we should have to explain ourselves, but to satisfy the curious, here 'tis. The deal was simple: Rockstar confirmed the code we played was reviewable with everything in there, with final bug-checking as the only work continuing on the game. They also confirmed we were the first to play the game outside of Rockstar, and it was a solid day's play, going from the start, and also getting an opportunity to see stuff further on in the game.

The only thing we omitted were the images we really wanted to run. Because security was too tight for us to keep a copy to take new screenshots from, we were subject to what Rockstar could supply us at the time. We weren't about to deny our readers the chance to catch the first review because of not being able to get specific shots, but we return to Vice City next issue to show you these things.

We didn't comment on censorship in the review at the time because there was no official answer at the time, and we'd rather wait to get that one right than speculate. Now we'll have the game, minus the prostitutes. Exactly the same deal as with GTAIII, which was such a minor change, the only genuine dawner was the delay it caused [which shouldn't affect a game's review].

We'll also readily point out that the boxed set for the Vice City soundtrack only has seven CDs, not nine as we stated. The details we were handed said nine (which we guessed included the chat stations), although we've seen other documentation from Rockstar that has said seven as well. Either way, if we were afraid to admit we were wrong about something, why would we do so now?

Please don't mistake the purpose of a review for that of a playguide either. The idea is to let folks know if the game in question is good, and whether certain elements work or not, rather than to spoil things by showering details of all the things they'll eventually discover, earn or unlock through the game.



Play where you want.

Finally, a cordless controller that gives you all the freedom you've been looking for, no strings attached. The new Logitech® Cordless Controller for PlayStation®2 is the only cordless controller officially licensed by Sony Computer Entertainment. Performing flawlessly from 6 metres away, it uses precise 2.4GHz RF technology to give you over 50 action-packed hours of gameplay. And with all the thrills of vibration feedback, the time has come to cut the cord.



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HARDCORE

Tips, tricks, cheats and challenges courtesy of the OPS2 team!



Yes, it's me again, back to serve you up another steaming plateful of PS2 tips. We've got a tasty walkthrough for *Onimusha 2*, along with tips for *Hitman 2*. And hell, if this doesn't fill you up, you've either got worms, or you need a regular diet of cheats, supplied by the PlayStation Powerline! I hope it's the latter...

Richie Young

Richie Young, Official Tips Guru

WALKTHROUGH

ONIMUSHA 2: SAMURAI'S DESTINY

Puzzles, bosses and trading tactics impaled in our ultimate walkthrough



TRADING ESSENTIALS

The trading system is new to *Onimusha 2*, and allows you to exchange items with key characters – Ekei, Magoichi, Kotaru and Oyu – to receive useful gifts.



There are four ways to obtain gifts for trading purposes:

- 1) Shop
- 2) Treasure Chests
- 3) Townsfolk
- 4) Item Exchange

By giving gifts to the key characters, you can win their friendship and play their subsections later in the game. Gifts can either be purchased using money (collected from fallen foes) in the village shop, or found in treasure chests dotted throughout the game. To trade, stand next to a key character and press the Start button. Simply scroll through the Gifts menu and choose the item you want to give. If the character likes the gift, they'll usually smile and laugh, rewarding you with an item of their own. Characters hold some valuable items that can only be obtained through trading – such as the rib pieces, used to unlock a secret door later in the game. This will be fully explained later on. Basically, each character likes particular types of items, outlined as follows...

1) OYU

Female swordsman. The love Interest. You get to control her later in the game, regardless of what gifts you trade. She can be found on the balcony above the wine house.

Likes: Female things, such as dresses, jewellery and flowers.

2) MAGOICHI

The gunslinger. Found in the wine house, next to Ekei, the monk.

Likes: Scholarly things and ancient artefacts, like scrolls, guns and antiques.

3) EKEI

A monk of somewhat rotund proportions. Sits in the wine house.

Likes: Food, wine and anything relating to indulgence, which explains his rather ample girth, presumably.

4) KOTAROU

The teenage ninja. She sits in the room above the wine house.

Likes: Teenage stuff, toys, playing cards and gadgets like the compass.

IN HARDCORE THIS MONTH

102	ONIMUSHA 2: SAMURAI'S DESTINY...GUIDE
106	HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN...TIPS
106	BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT...CHEATS
106	NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2...CHEATS
106	HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN...CHEATS
106	STREET HOOPS...CHEATS
106	KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER...CHEATS
106	BLADE II...CHEATS
106	RED FACTION 2...CHEATS

ONIMUSHA 2: SAMURAI'S DESTINY

- PLAYERS 1
- MEMORY CARD SPACE 461K
- DIFFICULTY MODERATE
- COMPLETION TIME 7-12 HRS
- REVIEWED OPS2#07

VERDICT

"Survival horror fans and beginners alike will have a slashing great time."

Graphics	09	Overall
Sound	08	
Gameplay	07	08
Life span	07	

HONE THOSE NINJA SKILLS

Dispatch zombies in record time with our direct line to samurai survival. If all else fails, there are dirty tricks...



1 BLOCK AND KICK

Remember to block (holding **[X]**) when cornered, then sneak in some hits. This is particularly useful against the razor-spine roller dogs and lumbering demon samurai.



2 SWAP WEAPONS

If you run out of soul power for a particular weapon, pop into the menu and swap swords. This way, you can keep juggling between special attacks – vital for boss encounters.



3 CHARGE AND COMBO

Hold **[X]** while stood still to charge your weapon. For a powerful, non soul-sapping attack, charge your current weapon and launch into a combo (tapping **[X]**, **[Y]**, **[X]**).



4 SHOOT 'EM

A few well-placed rifle shots can disable the annoying rooftop archer lizards with ease. The flame bow is useful against demon queen Jujudoma.



5 GET CRITICAL

To perform an ISSEN (one-blow critical hit) tap **[X]** precisely when the enemy attacks you. If you've timed it right, Jubel will quickly stab his foes in a flash of white light.



6 USE THE HERB

If your energy's running low, always top up with a cheeky herb or pill medicine. It's very easy to get mugged by multiple foes and lose a lot of energy in a quick burst.

ACT 1 JUBEL'S VILLAGE

Nice and easy to begin with, but there are still a couple of pitfalls round those corners.



Mosey past the save point towards the village. When you reach the pond, skip over the stones into the cave. You'll eventually meet a strange lady and receive the first Oni stone. Exit via the cave, head back to where the game began and enter the broken door. Scour the house to find the abacus, fork, tea set, kaleidoscope and both halves of the Four Gods dragon map (one by slashing a hanging scroll, the other by searching the box in the pagoda near the garden). This detour isn't essential, but helps later on. Return to the dragon shrine and claim the lightning sword. After a brief cut-scene you'll arrive in the village. After the Oyu event, explore the village and talk to everyone. The man next to the kimono lady yields some confetti, the bloke with the backpack a scroll. Head up the steps to the stables to find the tengu mask, hidden in a barely-visible box by the log pile. Head to the Ironsmith, smash the wooden barrels and pull the lever to activate the lift. Run quickly past the smashed barrels to claim the bow/arrows in a chest.

Head to the North of the town, onto the mountain road, killing all the enemies to claim their money. Talk to the man guarding the entrance of the cave, then return to the town and the Wine House. After Magolchi and Ekel fight, you get the item trading scroll. Buy the Mountain Entrance Permit for 100 gold from the man at the back end of the Wine House. Talk to the two men in front of the Ironsmith Shop to meet Kotaruu at the second floor of the Wine House. Go to the man guarding the entrance of the cave and show him the Permit. Save the game in the mine (Save: 100) – about one hour should have elapsed.

ACT 2 THE MINE

It's time to head deeper underground as things really start to hot up.



After the cut-scene proceed down the left shaft. Solve the puzzle at the altar (right bottom, bottom left). Get the half scroll and gem. Return to the main room and proceed to the right. Meet Ekel, get the map, and enjoy the cut-scene. Fight the beasts in the tunnels to get the money for trading. Take the right fork where the path branches like a T-junction. Depending on who've you've traded with, Ekel or Magolchi will help you fight. Clear the screen of lizards and advance to the Dragon Shrine to get the Ice pike. Return to the T-junction and go left. Break the magical seal (looks like a wheel) with the Ice pike (Save before the door: 1.15). Put the first Oni stone into the hole on the left of the wall at the deep end. Fight Gingafatsu, the spider bloke. The only thing to worry about is when the spider sucks you in, so be ready to retreat. When the spider corks it, exit through back of the room. Before talking to the Injured Man, solve

the puzzle box behind him, further down the corridor (bottom right, right top, bottom left, right bottom). You'll need the scroll for a puzzle later on. Talk to the Injured bloke and return to the village, where you'll receive the Portal Key. Now for a little trading...

ACT 3 ONIMUSHA CASTLE

It's time to return to one of your old stomping grounds and kick some behind...



Return to the mine and advance to help your allies. If you're on friendly terms with Kotaruu, there's a brief cut-scene where you rescue him. Head to the room where you defeated the spider ogre boss. Defeat the foes, advance some more and then use the portal key on the lid (remember: you'll need to enter the item menu to retrieve the key). Warp to the new area where you must defeat the two ogres. Enter the door with the broken seal and collect the crystal orb from the treasure chest on the bottom floor by the winding stairs. Ascend the stairs to reach the castle.

Upon entering the castle, make your way to the top left room in the Hall area. Open both chests to collect the map and urn. Solve the Puzzle Chest of 15. Get skeleton finger (one of two). Return to the Hall and advance through the middle door to help your allies. Next proceed to the Inner hall and solve the Puzzle Treasure Chest (right bottom, top right, left top). Get the Life Pearl (Save: 2.04). Advance through the door at the end into the Staircase Hallway. Enter the slightly hidden door at the bottom of the stairs into the Well Room to meet the trapped soul. Get the yellow book from the shelf in the back. Return to the Staircase Hallway and ascend the stairs to the second floor Connection Hallway.

There's a cut-scene with a crying baby, where Ekel goes mental. Advance into the stone room by following the gantry above the main hall. Get the purify pendant from the shelf. Return to the Well Room and use the purify pendant to get the second skeletal finger (Save: 2.58). Return to the Inner Hallway and use both skeletal fingers on the sealed door that looks like a ribcage. Enter the door to trigger an event. Battle the two enemies and advance for your first battle with Gogandantess. Finally, advance through the narrow passageway and up the ladders. Once outside, talk to Oyu to receive the blue orb (Faith). Use the orb on the steel ball for a surprise.

ACT 4 VILLAGE END

Time to put on your gold medallion, sport your cheesiest grin and get trading!



Listen up! This is the final village section and your last chance to trade. Make sure you have all three claw pieces and have made friends with the character you want to control later on. As explained, being mates with Ekel means you can't play

as Magolchi, so plan carefully. Leave the stables and talk to Oyu on the second floor of the Wine House. Go to the Market Place and talk to the woman holding an umbrella (Save: 3.46) – triggering this event means you can't return to the village, make sure you're ready.

After the cut-scene, head for the pond where Jubel started his adventure. Advance into the cave to trigger a shock event. Get the red ring and leave the cave. Now the multiple path system really kicks in. If you're friendly with Magolchi, he'll appear outside the cave and give you the Salga Bomb. Use the Salga bomb on the breakable rocks to the side of the Dragon Shrine to get a soul necklace. With the optional event over, head back to the Jagyu house (where you collected the tea set and the Four Gods map). Solve the puzzle treasure chest in the left corridor (top right, right bottom). Go into the garden and enter the room with the dresser. Sit through the optional Oyu event, then use the red ring on the dresser. Solve the puzzle using the Four Gods Dragon map (look in your Special Items menu to view the map and match the symbols). Go down the ladder and jump the pit. Cut the rope and a razor will head your way. Run back to the pit, leap and hang until the razor passes. Pull yourself up and continue to the exit. Save at the mountain edge (Save: 4.07).

ACT 5 THE FOREST

Can't see the wood for the trees? Listen up and you'll make it through to the other side.



Advance on the mountain path to do battle with the aid of your allies. After the bridge battle, go down the steps into the temple with the Dragon Shrine. Grab the Wind Maru weapon and back track to the green seal on the mountain path. Use the Wind Maru to break the seal and get the Nobunaga statue (one of three). Return to the temple area and follow the forest path. The forest is essentially a puzzle, leading to some interesting sub-routes. If you're friendly with Kotaruu and get lost three times, you'll trigger his alternate route.

SUB-ROUTE

Playing as Kotaruu, pick up the blue Soul Absorbing Rosary by the Save Point. Climb the ladder and grab the Red Illusion Dream Wedge from the treasure chest. Head to the bridge. Use the wedge in the area bathed with red light to enter the Red Illusion Dream Dimension. [This is exactly like the Demon realm from Onimusha.] Battle to the bottom level to receive the Red Stone Pillar, and the Blue Illusion Wedge. Cross the bridge and return to the Dragon Shrine. Kotaruu can climb the wall next to the stone tablet.

Advance past the swamps and through the door, using the Blue Illusion Wedge in the area of blue light. If you reach the deepest floor, you'll receive the Blue Stone Pillar. Use the Red Stone Pillar and Blue Stone Pillar on the totem beside the Save Point. Enter the forest and return control to Jubel. Now defeat the yellow creature floating in the air to reveal the real path. Use the special Wind

→ Maru attack to do this more easily, and don't waste time fighting anything but the floaty yellow beast. Do this three times to exit the forest. After a brief cut-scene, our old pal Gingafatsu returns for a whopper scrap.

ACT 6 THE BEACH

Life may be a beach, but Onimusha couldn't be further from the truth – it's a bitch!

Once you've defeated Gingafatsu, collect Nobunaga Statue 2. Advance to trigger an ally event. Ignore the swamp (moving left of the save point), go up the stairs, and reach a passage seal hidden in the undergrowth. There's an optional event if you're friendly with Oyu. Use the Dancing Thunder Knife to break the seal and obtain the Nobunaga Statue 3. Return to the swamp for an optional event with Magochi. Cross the water (ignoring the dancing seals) and enter the door. Solve the Puzzle Chest to the side of the stone fence (bottom left, right centre) to get the Wind Maru special attack scroll. Pull the lever beside the monitor to see a fleeting image of the three Nobunaga Statues. The pattern is randomly arranged – memorise the order from left to right, then place your three Nobunaga Statues accordingly and a new passage will appear.

Go down the passage and enter the red door. Advance to the save point (Save: 4.46). Make sure to enhance your weapons, focusing on the Wind Maru and Ice pipe. Enter battle with the parasol-wielding hag. Defeat her to receive the Jade of Honesty. Activate the device on the wall to open a new passage. When the passage closes, the area fills with poison gas, so leg it towards the sea. After the event, use the save point (Save: 4.56) but don't overwrite the last save point if you've just taken a beating! Use the Jade of Honesty on the boat to reach Onigashima Ogre Island. Here we go – the re-match with Gogandantess!

ACT 7 OYU'S SUB-ROUTE

Time to get in with Oyu – she'll show you pleasures hidden to mere mortals...

Switch control to Oyu and receive the Red Soul Absorbing Rosary from Takaiyo. Use the Save point in the corner of the room. Go down the central tunnel to the room with the huge statues. At the end of the passage, pick up the Key Plate from the treasure chest. Return to the main hall and use the Key Plate on the fenced structure – where Takaiyo appeared – to unlock the two remaining doors. Go through the right hand door and advance until you reach the huge shrine statue. Collect the map. Proceed to the room with the glass floor, and kill a leaping fish to reveal the way out. Go down the ladder and defeat the multi-tentacled beast to reveal the portal of white light. Enter the portal, and battle towards the save point (Save: 5.13). Don't ignore the treasure chest containing the sword – or forget to equip it!

At the end of the crystal bridge, you'll reach a huge ice cavern and a boss battle. After defeating him, you'll receive the Break Demon Flute – vital for the final battle with Gogandantess. Return to where you left Jubel, and switch control. Playing as Jubel, first retrieve the Sol Barren Hammer from the Dragon Shrine – the last weapon. Next go through the right-hand door (where you previously went as Oyu). Advance until you reach the passage seal next to the portal and use the Sol Barren Hammer. Pick up the Iron Key. Go up the ladder and return to the main hall with the Dragon Shrine. Go through the door by the Save Point.

Collect the brown book. Collect Oni Gourd. There's an cut-scene featuring Oyu, this is where you will receive the red soul necklace. At the far end of the U-shaped room, stand under the ceiling fan, and press **△** to use the special attack of the Rotating Wind Maru. Use the elevator to descend, if you're on friendly terms with Ekel then he'll appear and fight with you, in terms prompting the appearance of the Yellow Soul Necklace. Collect the map and solve the Puzzle Chest (left top, top centre, right

bottom) in front of the ladder to get the Improved Gun, and you're ready to move on.

ACT 8 EKEI'S SUB-ROUTE

Split personality: utilise your allies to help you in your quest.

Ascend the ladder and advance until you reach the Puzzle of 34. Solve this and get the Golden Inscription Key. Smash the pipe to the left to receive the Rare Mushroom – mind the explosion! Backtrack to the room with the moving aerial blocks and Industrial feel. Climb the ladder onto the small platform and use the Golden Inscription Key to stop the moving crates. Cross the gap and use the Iron Key on the door. There's an optional cut-scene where Kotaru attacks. Solve the puzzle under the altar to reveal the pillar of green light. Enter the green light to teleport to the roof of Onimusha castle. Descend the ladder and solve the fiendish puzzle chest. Follow the spiral walkway to the ground level. Get the Green Illusion Wedge from the treasure chest beside the save point (Save: 5.53). Try to exit the main door. Note: this is where Ekel's possible sub-route begins.

SUB-ROUTE

Switch control to Ekel. Enter the corridor with the paintings and get the Yellow Soul Absorbing Rosary. Exit through the door into the pond area. Nab the Sakura Key from the treasure chest at the South end. Exit through the door into Onimusha castle courtyard. Enter the castle, proceed through the central doors and use the Sakura Key to enter the previously-sealed room on your right. Get the armour from the treasure chest and equip it. Solve the Puzzle Chest (left centre, top left, right top) to get a soul stone. Continue until you find the New Moon Key in the treasure chest. Return to the pond area and use the New Moon Key on the sealed walkway door to the left. Advance on the one-way path until you reach the waterfall – find the chest in the alcove, and equip the Halberd. Go through the door and save in the bathhouse. Descend, and sail to the distant building. Enter the building and fight the bull boss. Get the Snake Key and return to where you left Jubel. Use the key to let him out, and it's here that the route ends!

ACT 9 MAGOICHI'S SUB-ROUTE

Schizo shenanigans as the sub-plots contort into a web of intrigue.

Switch control to Jubel. Exit the room and enter the sealed door to the right. Break the door seal with the Lightning Sword and use the Green Illusion Dream Wedge to enter the Green Spirit Dimension. Battle through all ten floors to be rewarded with the Purple Necklace. If you didn't play as Ekel, exit the Green Dimension, advance to the pool area and collect the shield key. Move to the castle, through the hall and open the door on your right. Get the Moon Key, return to the pool area and open the door leading to the bathhouse on the far gantry. Before you enter, move along the gantry to your right and enter the room with the glowing yellow light (using the Ice spear). If you didn't control Ekel, this is where you'll play as Magochi. Enter dimension. Switch to Magochi. Advance on the one-way path inside the cave. Defeat the multi-tentacled

beast. Activate the switch to lower the drawbridge. Use the Save Point midway through the cave (Save: 6.51). Pick up the flamethrower. Defeat the bull boss to get the Antidote Powder Bamboo Canister. Release Jubel. Scour the cave to find all the petrified statues, and use the Canister to revive them to receive health items. Return to the pillar of light. Sub-route ends. If you play as Jubel, break the passage seal with the Rotating Wind Maru.

Once you've returned to the gantry area, head towards the bathhouse. Save game. Sail across to where Ekel fought the bull boss. Enter the room with the two statues blocking the path and use the Canister to revive them. Speak to both men to receive a Secret Medicine, then advance to the altar. Solve the puzzle to reveal a new pillar of light. Enter the pillar to teleport to the next area (Save: 7.24). Open chest. If you have three claw pieces (from trading) you will be able to open the door of bones. Solve the Puzzle Chest inside (top right, right bottom, bottom left, left centre) to get the Black Necklace.

ACT 10 THE CONCLUSION

It's the final countdown – are you ready for Onimusha 2's ultimate test?

Proceed to the circular area, defeat the foes. Optional cut-scene. Enter the small maze (with tight corridors). At the end of one of the paths is a Puzzle Chest (right top, right bottom, top left, left bottom). Get Ogre Stone. Advance through the maze (easy) and reach the elevator. Use the Wind Maru to activate the ceiling fan. Descend the elevator, pick up the Red Jade Key. Head back to the dragon shine area where you took control of Oyu. Advance to the room with the operating table and use the Red Jade Key on the right hand door (slightly obscured by the camera). Advance for an event with Oyu and Tokichiro (Save: 8.16).

Advance to the double door and prepare for the final battle with Gogandantess – payback time.

Receive the Jade of Respect and advance into the pipe room. Solve the Puzzle Chest by the ladder

(right bottom, bottom right, top left, left top, top centre). Get Strength

Stone. Explore the pipes to find the route across – you have to perform some small leaps – and climb the ladder into the room with the huge statues. At the gold statue, use the Jade of Respect (Save: 8.30). After you gain control again, inspect the small plane to start the shutter puzzle. In the power room of the airship, solve the Puzzle Chest (right centre, top centre, right bottom, bottom centre, left centre, top right). Get Ogre Stone. Exit the power room.

Enter corridor of escalators leading to the control room. After the event, find the red button on the control panel. Cut-scene (Save: 8.41). Enter door. Advance to stairs. Open chest. Edge around the roof and enter the first chest.

Get the blue scroll and Purple Demon Edge. Walk past the shrine to the hidden corridor at the back. Ascend ladder. Fight aerial demon, using plenty of special Wind Maru attacks. Get the Gold Plate and insert it in the golden gap on the rooftop dragon statue. Head back to the walkway. Advance to the second door on the right before the bridge. Use Purple Demon Edge to enter another realm. Win 20 battle rounds to claim the secret Fire Sword. Go over the bridge and ensure you level up all your weapons (Save: 9.14). Climb ladder, fight spider ogre again (use the Ultimate Fire Sword). Collect final

Oni gem. Use gem to activate lift. Now for the final battle. Once you've cleared this hurdle, you've finished *Onimusha 2*. Phew!



■ **OYU!** Befriending different characters gives you multiple subplots.



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CODE-U-LIKE

Need to cheat your way to victory on a certain game? Write to us and we'll ease your pain.

■ BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT (SLES 51044)

Fast off the line

Are you sick and tired of being beaten off the line by the other cars? There is actually a way that you can launch from the start line faster. Switch to the third person mode so that you can see the back of the car, then while holding **ⓧ**, repeatedly tap the **Ⓐ** button until you start to see smoke coming from your back tyres. Now just before the commentator says "GO" release the **ⓧ** button, then press it down again. If done correctly, you should launch off the line ahead of all the other cars.

■ NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2 (SLES 50731)

Couldn't be bothered trying to earn all the cool cars? Try entering these codes instead. For all these cheats go to the main menu screen and enter the code.

Car.....Code
Unlock BMW Z8.....**ⓧ**, **→**, **ⓧ**, **→**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**
HSV Coupe GTS.....**ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**
Ford TS50.....**→**, **←**, **→**, **←**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**
Aston Martin V12.....**ⓧ**, **→**, **ⓧ**, **→**, **ⓧ**, **←**, **ⓧ**, **←**
Ferrari F550.....**ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **→**, **ⓧ**, **→**, **ⓧ**

■ HITMAN 2 (SLES 50992)

Unlocking silent twin ballers

Like the twin ballers but don't want to alert everyone to your presence? Well there is actually a set of twin silenced ballers. To earn these, you'll need to complete a mission with a 'Silent Assassin' ranking. To do this you'll need to finish the mission without alerting the guards. The safest way to do this is to use the wire to strangle everyone and avoid all guards unless they must be killed to finish the mission.

■ STREET HOOPS (SLES 50862)

Want to spice things up courtside? Here's some alternate uniforms, and a bonus ball. Enter the following codes at the cheats screen to don the new duds.

Uniform	Code
Pimp.....	ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ
Clown.....	ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ
Cowboy.....	ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ
Kung-Fu.....	ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ
Santa.....	ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ
Tuxedo.....	ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ , ⓧ

Black ball cheat

At the cheat menu enter **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ** to play with a black ball.

■ BLADE II (SLES 51013)

Think you're as good as Wesley at dusting vamps? Or finding things a little too tough? These two codes will help adjust the difficulty either way.

For both of these cheats go to the main menu screen and enter the code.

Daywalker Code

←, **ⓧ**, **↑**, **↓**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**

Make Escorts Invincible Code

ⓧ, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**



■ KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER (SLES 51200)

Having trouble unlocking hidden extras? These phone codes will do the trick. Enter the following codes into the cellphone at the cheats screen.

Action	Code
Trippy Visuals.....	(818) 555-1447
Unlock Tony Hawk.....	(323) 555-9787
Unlock Tiki God.....	(888) 555-4506
Unlock Pastrana.....	(800) 555-6292
Activate High Jumps.....	(217) 555-0217
Maximise Stats.....	(212) 555-1776

■ RED FACTION II (SLES 51133)

A couple of codes for an alternate mode, and a straight out cheat for trigger happy gamers: Enter these codes at the cheats menu.

Director's Cut Mode

ⓧ, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**

Unlimited Ammo

ⓧ, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**, **ⓧ**



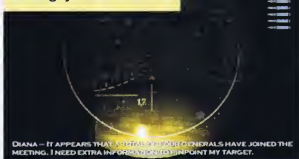
HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

Hitmen are the modern day ninja – you never hear them before they slay you. Here's how to do it!

HOW TO PLAN A HIT

Or, the best way to ease yourself into the Leon-like world of the professional hitman: Mission One. Heading to the front door is a postman, far off to the right is a delivery boy going in the back door. What to do? Well, going in the front door will alert the guards, so head quickly to the back. Shoot the delivery boy with the silenced pistol and take his clothes. Walk to one of the baskets and place your weapons inside to hide them from the frisking guards. Walk through the door and head out a little from the guards before

■ **SCOPING:** Always make sure to familiarise yourself thoroughly with the level.



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THE SHORTLIST

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OPS2 AWARDS

To filter out the pearls from the swine, OPS2 has introduced a brand new colour-coded ratings system.



GOLD

★ Only awarded to games that score the full 10/10.



SILVER

★ Only awarded to games that score the full 09/10.



BRONZE

★ Only awarded to games that score the full 08/10.

THE GIST OF THE LIST

Each month OPS2 take the best of titles of each issue and add them to the list. Making way for them are the games that either scored poorly, or those that are simply too old to find anymore. The end result... A constantly refined round-up of the best PlayStation 2 games money can buy.

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP

[EA Sports/EA]

The World Cup version of FIFA 2002 with more pizzazz but sadly lacking in game modes.
Overall 07

7 BLADES

[Konami/KCEJ]

Ninja-styled adventure with a 'healthy' dose of chopstick gameplay.
Overall 06

18 WHEELER

[Acclaim/Sega/Acclaim]

Brash, chunky and colourful truck racer. Unfortunately it just doesn't offer enough substance to satisfy the hardened gamer.
Overall 06

ACE COMBAT: DISTANT THUNDER

[SCEE/Namco]

Best Ace Combat yet. A graphically-polished flight sim with a variety of missions. Best with a flightstick of some kind.
Overall 07

AFI: LIVE 2003

[Acclaim/IR Games]

Good enough to be a must buy for footy fans, but not flashy or deep enough to compete with big budget sport sims.
Overall 06

★ AGGRESSIVE INLINE

[SCEE/7 Axis]

There's more than enough inline action to keep you impressed, entertained and amused until Tony Hawk's 4 says, 'Buy me, dude!'
Overall 08

★ AIRBLADE

[SCEE/Criterion]

Intricate visuals, sublime handling, massive air - everything you could want hovering to be. Back to the Future anyone?
Overall 08

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2002

[Acclaim/Acclaim Studios Austin]

An enjoyable all-round game of baseball with oodles of depth, and surprisingly compelling to watch as well as to play.
Overall 07

ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE

[Infogrames/Darkworks]

An undeniably scary survival horror game series, but one that fails to frighten the pants off the PS2 in this comeback.
Overall 06

AQUA AQUA: WETRIX 2.0

[SCI/Zed Two]

Addictive, well-realised update of the N64 puzzler Wetrix.
Overall 07

ARCTIC THUNDER

[Midway/Midway/Inland Productions]

Crude visuals, but plenty of fast and furious gameplay.
Overall 07

ARMORED CORE 2

[Ubi Soft/From Software]

Infinitely-tweakable first-person mech shooter.
Overall 07

★ BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE

[Interplay/Black Isle Studios]

Play D & D on a console! An RPG that does the PS2 great justice.
Overall 08

BARBARIAN

[Interplay/Titus]

A rough-cut fighting game with RPG elements and branching storylines.
Overall 07

BATMAN VENGEANCE

[Ubi Soft/Ubi Soft]

Interesting action adventure, but just a little too 'on rails' to provide a real challenge.
Overall 06

BLOOD OMEN 2

[Eidos/Crystal Dynamics]

An occasionally very satisfying blood sucking adventure let down by largely unoriginal gameplay.
Overall 06

★ BURNOUT

[Acclaim/Criterion Studios]

OutRun grows up, and learns how to crash properly. Thrilling, edgy race action that will threaten you no claims bonus.
Overall 08

★ BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT

[Acclaim/Criterion Studios]

An even more intense racing experience than its predecessor. The Fast & the Furious in a video game.
Overall 08

★ CAPCOM VS SNK 2

[Capcom Eurosoft/Capcom]

A superb 2D beat-'em-up from the house that knows all there is to know about combat. With endless two-player fun.
Overall 08

CART FURY: CHAMPIONSHIP RACING

[Midway/Midway]

Arcade racer with crazy physics and a dose of high-speed hard shouldering.
Overall 06

★ COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3

[Codemasters/Codemasters]

The latest McRae game set new standards in Rally racing visuals. A must have for offroad racing fans.
Overall 09

★ COMMANDOS 2

[Eidos/Pyro]

A daunting but extremely worthy and rewarding strategy game.
Overall 08

CONFLICT ZONE

[Ubi Soft/MASA]

A pretty run-of-the-mill RTS game that cleverly forces you to take account of media coverage.
Overall 06

CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTX

[Vivendi Universal/Traveller's Tales]

Crash spins onto PS2 but little has changed from PSone.
Overall 06

★ CRAZY TAXI

[Acclaim/Sega/Acclaim]

Arcade thrills aplenty in this no-holds-barred city-smashing racer. If you want speed, buy this now.
Overall 08

★ CRICKET 2002

[EA Sports/EA Sports]

The best leather-on-willow sim on any console, ever. Relax and make like it's summer.
Overall 08

DARK CLOUD

[SCEE/Level 5]

An entrancing RPG with atmospheric music and a world-building element thrown in for good measure.
Overall 07

DAVE MIRRA

[Acclaim/7 Axis]

Orthodox but impressive, this BMX sim has an inventive array of tricks.
Overall 07

DEAD OR ALIVE 2

[SCEE/Tecmo]

Bistering beat-'em-up that's famous for its stealthy gameplay and collection of extremely well-endowed lady fighters.
Overall 07

★ DEUS EX

[Eidos/Ion Storm]

The thinking man's action/shooter/adventure genre-busting game that redefines expectations. Superb.
Overall 09

★ DEVIL MAY CRY

[Capcom Eurosoft/Capcom]

Melting rip-roaring battling with lush surroundings and a superb gothic atmosphere. One of the best PS2 games yet? Definitely.
Overall 09

DNA

[Virgin Interactive/Hudsonsoft]

Gene warfare and confusing puzzles abound in this bizarre manga adventure.
Overall 06

DONALD DUCK: QUACK ATTACK

[Ubi Soft/Disney Interactive]

A first-generation platformer that suffers from Stone Age gameplay and graphics.
Overall 04

DRAGON'S LAIR

[Digital Leisure/ Cinematronics]

Unplayable retro adventure. Should have stayed firmly stuck on the Laser Disc where it belonged.
Overall 02

DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S

[EA/Square]

Dismal racer. Fails to evoke any emotion at all.
Overall 04

★ DROPSHIP: UNITED

[SCEE/Studio Camden]

Impressive combat sim that rewards commitment with paced and varied gameplay.
Overall 08

★ DYNASTY WARRIORS 3

[THQ/KOEI]

More of the same great mass battles and explosive action, marred slightly by samey gameplay.
Overall 08

★ ECCO THE DOLPHIN: DEFENDER THE FUTURE

[SCEE/Sega/Appaloosa]

You're a dolphin and it's up to you to save the world from an alien invasion. Relax in the new age calm, yet challenging underwater adventure.
Overall 08

★ ENDGAME

[Empire/Cunning]

Sets a new standard in the lightweight shooter genre. Innovative, refreshing and most of all, a ton of fun.
Overall 09

★ ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

[Activision/LucasArts]

Adventure that includes smart visuals, witty script and intelligent puzzles.
Overall 08

ESPN INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD

[Konami/KCEJ]

Graphically impressive athletics sim marred only by iffy AI.
Overall 06

ESPN NATIONAL HOCKEY NIGHT

[Konami/KCEJ]

Other hockey sims on the market with better gameplay put this in the sin bin.
Overall 06

ESPN NBA 2NIGHT

[Konami/KCEJ]

Hardcore gameplay makes this one for basketball heads only.
Overall 06

ESPN X GAMES SKATEBOARDING

[Konami/KCEJ]

Not-very-extreme skateboarding sim with some unsightly graphical glitches. You're best off sticking with Tony Hawk's.
Overall 05

ESPN WINTER X-GAMES SNOWBOARDING

[Konami/KCEJ]

Lifelike snowboarder, ruined by unsightly bland graphics, unresponsive controls and a lack of excitement.
Overall 06

EOE: EVE OF EXTINCTION

[Eidos/Muke's]

A dull, button mashing affair.
Overall 05

EVERGRACE

[Ubi Soft/Crave Entertainment/From Software]

An ultimately depressing RPG that fails to engage the player at any meaningful level.
Overall 02

EVIL TWIN

[Ubi Soft/In-Utero]

Adventure from the dark side of platforming. Average, so-so animation with 76 levels of twisted plot.
Overall 05

EXTERMINATION

[SCEE/Deep Space]

Alien-inspired survival horror-fest that is set in a deserted Antarctic research base. Positively crawling with cool design innovations.
Overall 07

★ EXTREME-G 3

[Acclaim/Acclaim]

A neon beast of a future bike racer that requires skill and brains. Takes some 'inspiration' from the WiiEout series. Not for the faint-hearted.
Overall 08

F1 2001

[EA Sports/EA Sports]

Another solid PlayStation 2 Formula One title, but ultimately it's a tad soulless.
Overall 07

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON 2000

[EA Sports/EA/Visual Sciences]

Hardcore F1 fans will find this a little too easy.
Overall 06

FANTAVISION

[SCEE/SCEE]

The world's first fireworks game. Not enormous, but of rare and random beauty.
Overall 05

FERRARI F355 CHALLENGE

[SCEE/Sega]

One of the most realistic racing simulations ever. More for driving game experts than casual racers.
Overall 07

FIFA 2003

[EA Sports/EA Sports Canada]

Despite closing the gap with a new engine, this is still a goal down to Pro Evolution Soccer 2.
Overall 08

★ FINAL FANTASY X

[Sony/Square]

Nothing else needs to be said about this brilliant RPG. A classic Square adventure with next-gen presentation and production.
Overall 09

★ FORMULA ONE 2003

[SCEE/Studio Liverpool]

Another F1 corker! All the drivers, tracks and cars included. Load it up and feel the speed.
Overall 08

SIX OF THE BEST

SPORTS GAMES



1. PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2

By expanding on what was already the world's most realistic soccer simulation, Konami have delivered the 'total package' with Pro Evolution 2. The Master League's detailed transfer system and the teamwork ratings each player have make this the perfect blend of sports action and hardcore management simulation. A must for sports fans.

*Pro Evolution Soccer 2 is out now from Infogrames

2. VIRTUA TENNIS 2

The training exercises in the World Circuit mode may seem ludicrous, but this is the best career mode in any racket sport to date. Plays beautifully.

*Virtua Tennis 2 is out now from Acclaim



3. FIFA 2003

FIFA may still be a little way off matching Pro Evolution 2, but this is the licensing makes a real difference for those who want something that looks like what they see on TV.

*FIFA 2003 is out now from Electronic Arts



4. NBA 2K3

The most realistic hoops game available for PS2, with every conceivable gaming mode you could want. About time someone gave us the whole package. Thanks Sega!

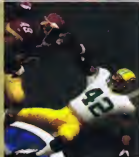
*NBA 2K3 is out now from Infogrames



5. NFL 2K3

It may not have the same sort of TV-style presentation that Madden can boast, but the play-calling system makes this the perfect way to learn and appreciate American Football.

*NFL 2K3 is out now from Infogrames



6. LMA MANAGER 2003

This won't suit everyone, but it offers the only true sports management simulation, and eases the newcomers in nicely. A good way to learn about the Euro leagues.

*LMA Manager 2003 is out now from Infogrames



FREESTYLE

[EA Sports/Page 44] This is potentially a great game, but it's scuppered by careless lack of fairness and failure to reward skill with progression.

Overall 07

★ FUR FIGHTERS [Acclaim/Bizarre Creations]

Cute fluffy creatures armed to the teeth with shotguns blast each other to pieces. The toy cupboard will never look innocent again.

Overall 08

★ G1 JOCKEY

[THQ/Koel] More like an exercise in statistical analysis than a horse racing game, with bland graphics and sound.

Overall 05

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

[Interplay/Planet Moon] The Reaper might be cool, but loading times hamper this port of a complex PC battle game.

Overall 06

★ GITAROO MAN [THQ/Koel]

If you have a PS2 collection, you should definitely have at least one game like this one in there! Check it out.

Overall 08

GLOBAL TOURING CHALLENGE: AFRICA

[Rage/Rage Warrington] An impressive racer that is further lifted by clever use of interesting locations.

Overall 07

GRANDIA II

[Ubi Soft/GameArts] Expansive classic RPG adventuring but with horrible graphics and repetitive, uninviting gameplay.

Overall 05

★ GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

[Take 2/Rockstar North] An even better than GTAIII! Cars, crooks, coke, and chaos with total freedom to do what you want, when you want. Funny, frantic. A must have for any serious, or not so serious gamer.

Overall 10

★ GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC

[SCEE/Polphony Digital] If you didn't know already, GT3 is the greatest driving game in the world. Buy it now.

Overall 09

★ GRAN TURISMO CONCEPT: 2002

[SCEE/Polphony Digital] A more accessible version of GT3, with concept cars. Perfect for those who just want to race, rather than play mechanic.

Overall 08

G-SURFERS

[Midas Interactive/Blade Interactive] Futuristic racer that's improved by an innovative track editor.

Overall 07

★ GUILTY GEAR X [Virgin/Sammy]

Pushes hard at beat-'em-up boundaries. The start of a new wave of next-gen 2D fighters.

Overall 08

GUN GRIFFON BLAZE

[Swing/GameArts] A mech shooter for robot obsessives everywhere.

Overall 07

★ HALF-LIFE [Vivendi Universal/Valve/Gearbox]

The award-winning PC first-person shooter/adventure arrives on PS2 in resplendent form. An essential purchase.

Overall 09

HEADHUNTER

[SCEE/Amuze] Dirty Hawk meets MGS2 in a world where the law is controlled by bounty hunters. There's a great game hidden here somewhere.

Overall 07

HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC [3DO/3DO]

Patchy PC-style adventure.

Overall 03

★ HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN [Eidos/Io]

A disturbingly realistic take on living the life of a hired killer. Not one for the squeamish or pure of heart, but awesome gaming to be had.

Overall 09

★ INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER [Konami/Ozisoft]

Genuine squads and more instant terrace gratification take ISS up to the PS2 level.

Overall 08

ISS 2

[Konami/Ozisoft] More arcadey than PES with better commentary, but dodgy ball physics and animation. Not for soccer purists.

Overall 07

★ JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY [SCEE/Naughty Dog]

A brilliant platformer from the makers of Crash Bandicoot introduces two heroes you'll be seeing a lot more of.

Overall 09

★ JAMES BOND 007 IN... AGENT UNDER FIRE [EA/EA Redwood Shores]

A thrilling single-player Bond experience with a great four-player mode and beautiful Bond girls.

Overall 08

JEREMY MCGRATH SUPERCROSS WORLD [Acclaim/Acclaim Studios Salt Lake]

A motocross game that's just like the real thing! Intense the thrills, speed, gritty handling and mud.

Overall 03

JET SKI RIDERS

[Eidos/Opus Corporation] Great water effects and Kawasaki-licensed Jet Skis. Shame about the racing...

Overall 06

KENGO: MASTER OF BUSHIDO

[Ubi Soft/LightWeight] A padded-out Training mode makes up for this smart ninja fighter's otherwise rather limited nature.

Overall 06

★ KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER [Activision/Treyarch]

A bit too similar to Tony Hawk for our liking, but still the best surfing game around.

Overall 08

KESSEN [Electronic Arts/Koel]

A real-time strategy game set in feudal Japan, where you get to command a huge army. Strategy fans only.

Overall 07

★ KINGDOM HEARTS [Sony/Squaresoft]

A beautifully produced RPG with Disney and Square characters. Don't let the kiddie vibe fool you, this one's very tough.

Overall 08

★ KLONOA 2: LUNATIA'S VEIL [SCEE/Namco]

Cute and cheerful platformer featuring the lovable glove-eared blue cat-rabbit hybrid.

Overall 08

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001 [EA Sports/EA Sports]

A more-than-competent boxing sim. Not a match for Rocky though.

Overall 06

KURI KURI MIX [Empire/From Software]

A blend of two-player co-operation and cutesy platformer. An odd but worthwhile addition to any PS2 collection.

Overall 07

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING [Acclaim/Acclaim]

'Violent ballet' with a shortage of, modes and options. Fine recreation of Pro wrestling.

Overall 05

★ LE MANS 24 HOURS [Infogrames/Melbourne House]

Accessible for the gamer who's daunted by sim-style vehicle handling, but has depth and realism in abundance.

Overall 08

★ LMA MANAGER 2002 [Rockstar/Angel Studios]

Speedy, urban racing, that boasts huge and action-packed New York and London environments. Sadly, the gameplay ain't that great.

Overall 04

★ LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS [EA/Stamfront]

Superb hack and slash gaming based on the movie, not the book.

Overall 08

MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2 [Capcom/Capcom]

Arguably the best 2D fighter available on the PS2.

Overall 07

★ MADDEN NFL 2003 [EA Sports/EA Tiburon]

While realistic enough, of the two major NFL games around, this is the flashier. Best for those who'd rather see high scores than realism.

Overall 08

★ MAT HOFFMANS PRO BMX 2 [Activision/Rainbow]

Whist impressive in many areas and exceptional in some, MHPB2 doesn't quite live up to expectations.

Overall 08

★ MAX PAYNE [Take 2/Rockstar]

A fine shooting game that is somewhat underplayed by the general public. Fantastic innovations that is completed with a very cinematic feel.

Overall 08

★ MAXIMO [THQ/Capcom]

Attribute to Ghosts 'N Goblins and an excellent mix of retro and modern gaming, resulting in one of the strongest 3D platformers available.

Overall 08

★ MDK2 ARMAGEDDON [Interplay/BioWare]

Originally a game on Dreamcast and PSone, this third-person action shooter in space has lost nothing in translation. Has three playable characters and is destined to be a cult classic.

Overall 09

★ MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE [EA/EA]

A very riveting FPS that has been wowing audiences the world over since the game was released. This is a superb game that should not be overlooked.

Overall 09

★ METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY [Konami/KCEJ]

A must-own, state-of-the-art tactical espionage action game that's reason enough to buy a PS2. A superbly paced, gripping story. Unbeatable sound and graphics - a benchmark for future PS2 titles.

Overall 10

MIDNIGHT CLUB

[Rockstar/Angel Studios] Speedy, urban racing, that boasts huge and action-packed New York and London environments. Sadly, the gameplay ain't that great.

Overall 04

MODERNGROOVE: MINISTRY OF SOUND [Ubi Soft/Modemgroove]

An entertaining lightshow generator, containing five full dance albums. Not quite up to the standards set by MTV.

Overall 06

MONSTERS, INC. [SCEE/Disney Interactive]

Disney Platform game based on the film. Initially amusing but sloppy and basic with a lifespan of no more than a few hours, though the film clips are entertaining.

Overall 04

MOTO GP [SCEE/Namco]

Gran Turismo on two wheels? Ish. A fantastic motorbike sim that rewards repeated play.

Overall 07

MOTO GP 2 [3DO/3DO]

A refreshing bike racer. Slightly repetitive gameplay and a shallow multiplayer, but slick, fast and realistic. Excellent 3D graphics and race replay facility.

Overall 07

MOTOR MAYHEM [Infogrames/Beyond Games]

Unoriginal deathmatch-based vehicle blasting.

Overall 05

★ MTV MUSIC GENERATOR [Codemasters/Jester]

Home DJ sampler/mixer music maker. It's enormous fun and high-on faultless. This is exciting and well put together - pick it up and start making your own thumping underground dance choons! Great for creative types.

Overall 09

★ MX SUPERFLY 2003: FEAT RICKY CAINWICHAE. [THQ/Pacific Coast Power]

Polished and engaging motocross sim that utilises its subject matter to great effect. An excellent extreme game.

Overall 07

MX RIDER [Infogrames/Paradigm]

Motocross/supercross sim that lacks the true grittiness and excitement of the sport.

Overall 06

NBA HOOPZ [Midway/Eurocom]

Instant arcade-styled basketball sim but there are better ones on the street.

Overall 06

THE SHORTLIST

NBA LIVE 2002
[EA Sports/EA Sports Canada]
An update of NBA Live 2001.
Only for true basketball nuts.
Overall 06

NBA STREET
[EA Sports Big/EA Sports]
Great looks, great to play, but not what most want. There's room for improvement.
Overall 06

★ **NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUITS 2**
[EA/Blackbox]
One of the better arcade racers to grace the PS2. Truly the best of the NFS series, not just a PS2 update.
Overall 08

★ **NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB**
[Acclaim/Acclaim Studios Austin]
American football game that has unique features, but unable to compete with Madden 2002.
Overall 08

NHL 2003
[EA Sports/EA Sports Canada]
The definitive ice hockey videogame, but only a slight improvement on NHL 2002.
Overall 07

NHL HITZ 2002
[Midway/Black Box]
A satisfying, if short-lived, arcade-style ice hockey game.
Overall 06

NY RACE
[Wanadoo/Kalisto]
Average future taxi race, based on the opening sequence of Luc Besson's sci-fi epic *The Fifth Element*. Nothing Crazy to see here.
Overall 05

ONI
[Rockstar/Bungle Software]
New character animation in an enjoyable 3rd person sci-fi romp.
Overall 07

★ **ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS**
[Capcom/Capcom]
Impressive survival horror that lets the PlayStation 2 run riot. Does suffer from an iffy PAL conversion, though.
Overall 08

OPERATION WINBACK
[Midas Interactive/KOE]
Lacks variety, but still an enjoyable stealth shooter, nevertheless.
Overall 06

ORPHEN
[Activision/Shade Inc]
Disappointing anime-inspired Japanese RPG.
Overall 04

PARAPPA THE RAPPER 2
[SCEE/NanoOn-sha]
Rhythm action game from Japan in which you play a rapping dog. Simple but compelling gameplay. Short life span and only really worth revisiting for nostalgia.
Overall 07

PARIS-DAKAR RALLY
[Acclaim/Broadsword Interactive]
Based on the race of the same name, this sim does little to inspire interest.
Overall 05

PENNY RACERS
[Midas/Takara]
A half-baked and underfed *GT3*, with just a few good tracks. It's a difficult one to recommend to anybody wanting a great racer.
Overall 04

POLICE 24/7
[Konami/KCET]
Basic cop-shot light gun game with motion capture option. Frantic and fast but lacks structure and individuality. Just another on-rails shoot-'em-up.
Overall 05

POOLMASTER
[Take 2/Ask]
Dull pool sim, despite some tidy ball physics.
Overall 05

PORTAL RUNNER
[3DO/3DO]
Vikki, of *Army Men* notoriety, gets her own title. It's the best of a bad bunch.
Overall 05

PRISONER OF WAR
[Codemasters/Wide Games]
Escaping from POW camps is all well and good, but you remain a prisoner of often rigid game objectives. Even so, this is a bold, compelling adventure game.
Overall 07

★ **PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2**
[Konami/Konami TYO]
For the second year running the Pro Evolution series has been the best soccer-sim on any system. Lack licenses, but has total realism.
Overall 09

★ **PROJECT EDEN**
[Eidos/Core Design]
Look beyond some not-great visuals and you'll lose weeks to this complex and satisfying first-person shooter/adventure.
Overall 08

★ **QUAKE III**
[EA/Id & Bullfrog]
In four-player, this FPS is the best multiplayer yet. A technical tour de force, it runs like greased lightning and looks absolutely gorgeous.
Overall 09

★ **RATCHET & CLANK**
[SCEE/Insomniac]
Pure platforming bliss from the company that create the original *Spyro the Dragon* tells of the Psones. Loads of gadgets lead to new ideas.
Overall 09

★ **RAYMAN REVOLUTION**
[Ubisoft/Ubisoft Soft]
Cartoon-quality graphics elevate this classic platformer starring a disoriented hero. A title worthy of PS2.
Overall 08

READY 2 RUMBLE: ROUND 2
[Midway/Midway]
A marvellous, arcade-based boxing game, pitting ridiculous cartoon fighters against each other.
Overall 07

★ **RED FACTION**
[THQ/Volition]
Ace first-person shooter that melds *MGS*-style tactics and the all-out, blood-soaked of the hallowed *Quake III*. Marred only by some average level design.
Overall 08

★ **RESIDENT EVIL: CODE: VERONICA X**
[Capcom Eurosoft/Capcom]
A captivating story, cinematic atmosphere, kinetic action, frights, thrills and copious amounts of blood-letting. Gave it to its disgustingly depraved clutches.
Overall 09

★ **REZ**
[SCEE/Sega [UGA]]
Fight computer viruses from within the system. Exploring the relationship between sound and colour this techno shooter provides pure gameplay. Unique, and refreshing in a world of me too! shooters.
Overall 09

RIDGE RACER V
[SCEE/Namco]
A popular racer, but high hopes were scuppered by the limited size and a lack of originality.
Overall 07

★ **RING OF RED**
[Konami/KCE]
A mech RTS that's fun? Oh yes. A must-buy for the discerning robot-fetishist after something different.
Overall 08

★ **ROCKY**
[Rage/Rage]
The best boxing title available for PS2. Has a great story mode that takes the player through the movies. Adrift!
Overall 08

RUGBY
[EA Sports/Creative Assembly]
So far the only PS2 game to represent this sport. More akin to Madden than FIFA in approach, a highly enjoyable and refined take on the sport. EA Sports does it again.
Overall 08

★ **RUMBLE RACING**
[EA/EA]
Fast and furious arcade stunt racer that has tons of challenge and replay value, especially in Two-Player mode. Full of totally insane courses to put you through your paces.
Overall 08

RUNE: VIKING WARLORD
[Take 2/Human Head]
A Viking slash-'em-up that should have been confined to the Dark Ages.
Overall 04

SALT LAKE 2002
[Ozisoft/Attention To Detail]
Soulless Winter Olympics game. Decent weather effects but the majority of events are rather tedious.
Overall 03

★ **SHADOW OF MEMORIES**
[Konami/KCET]
Filmic adventure that keeps the surprises coming with a serpentine plot.
Overall 08

SHAUN PALMER'S PRO SNOWBOARDER
[Activision/Dearsoft]
Basically Tony Hawk's on snow. It's an exhilarating sport, but the gameplay is unimaginative and the controls sluggish.
Overall 06

★ **SILENT HILL 2**
[Konami/KCET Team Silent]
One of the most atmospheric and genuinely frightening titles on PS2. Like all of your worst nightmares rolled in to one relentless videogame.
Overall 09

★ **SILENT SCOPE**
[Konami/KCET]
Click but simple shooting gallery-style game where you play a police sniper. Works surprisingly well, despite the lack of the sniper rifle from the arcade. A great launch title that they were still playing.
Overall 08

SILENT SCOPE 2
[Konami/Konami TYO]
A worthwhile update of this arcade sniper sim, though the formula is looking tired now.
Overall 07

SILPHED: THE LOST PLANET
[Swing/Thames/Amesoft]
Tedious top-down shooter, that shouldn't be on PS2.
Overall 03

SIR ALEX FERGUSON'S PLAYER MANAGER 2002
[3DO/Amco]
Adapt footy management sim, but lacks the killer goal.
Overall 06

★ **SKY ODYSSEY**
[SCEE/Cross for SCE]
A flight sim where you don't have to shoot anything, just complete crazy missions.
Overall 08

SLED STORM
[EA/EA]
A maxed-out, splashy remake of the Psones racing classic, very much in the SS mould.
Overall 06

SMASH COURT TENNIS PRO TOURNAMENT
[SCEE/Namco]
Deep & stylish this game suffers from disproportionate leaps in difficulty that may put off gamers. Now second seed to *Virtua Tennis 2* - *Sega Professional Tennis*.
Overall 07

SMUGGLER'S RUN 2: HOSTILE TERRITORIES
[Rockstar/Angel Studios]
Impressively big, fast and frantic, but not much different to its predecessor.
Overall 07

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE: GOLD EDITION
[Codemasters/Raven]
No-brainer first-person shooter that's average at best. Only for those craving mindless violence.
Overall 05

SOUL REAVER 2
[Eidos Interactive/Crystal Dynamics]
Soul-sucking fantasy adventure that revolves around the exploits of Raziel and his huge Reaver sword.
Overall 07

SPACE RACE
[3DO/3DO]
The cartoon Kart racer in its simplest form. Lacks originality and is a poor *Mario Kart* rip-off, but uses cel-shading to nice effect.
Overall 05

SPIDER-MAN
[Activision/Treyarch]
It doesn't display huge innovations over its Psones counterpart, although it's a solid and enjoyable *Spider* title either way.
Overall 07

SPLASHDOWN
[Infogrames/Rainbow Studios]
Above average *Sea-Doo* racer, with impressive water effects. The racing is sluggish, though.
Overall 07

★ **SPY HUNTER**
[Midway/Paradigm]
Pretend to be James Bond. Captures the spirit of the original game and adds further shiny next-gen knobs.
Overall 08

★ **SSX TRICKY**
[EA Sports Big/EA Sports Canada]
Inventive rainbow coloured high speed snowboard game packed with crazy courses, and crazier characters.
Overall 09

★ **STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER**
[Activision/LucasArts]
Mesmerising 3D Star Wars blaster with engaging missions and film-perfect sound effects.
Overall 09

STAR WARS: SUPER BOMBAD RACING
[Activision/Lucas Learning]
Banal cartoon kart racer. The Force is weak with this one.
Overall 05

STATE OF EMERGENCY
[Take 2/VIS Entertainment]
A shallow but worryingly enjoyable game that puts the player at the centre of a riot.
Overall 06

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE
[Codemasters/Raven Software/Pipedream Interactive]
File next to *Soldier of Fortune* in the poor PC port drawer. If it's sci-fi shooter thrills your after, you'd be better off to grab *Red Faction* on platinum instead.
Overall 04

★ **STUNTMAN**
[Atari/Reflections]
Won't have the wide appeal of the driver games due to its difficulty, but it's an ingenious concept that thrills and entertains.
Overall 08

★ **SUMMONER 2**
[Codemasters/TYO]
Follow-up to the RPG launch title. More action orientated than the original, but still an epic adventure for fans of fantasy.
Overall 08

SUPERCAR STREET CHALLENGE
[Activision/Exakt]
A by-the-book arcade racing game round desolate cities. Nothing to recommend it.
Overall 04

SWING AWAY GOLF
[EA Sports/T&E Soft]
Cutesy Psones golf sim that's let down by a poor PS2 conversion.
Overall 03

GLOSSARY

Just got into PS2? It's your first, so here's a few pointers to help you through this fast-paced guide to the latest and most exciting new videogames. But don't worry, a clue about what's going on about Well, without wanting to patronise those gamers who've been in the game for a while, or Spectrum by smiling out the meaning of gaming terms just involved in the reviews and previews here's your 'at a glance' guide to all things PS2 and beyond.

Afterburn: A series of back-to-back updates.
AI: Artificial Intelligence.
Analogue: A continuous degree of input, as opposed to digital, which has a set number of buttons.
Boards: Gameboards, or games hardware, the digital brain.
Colin-cup: Colin McRae's racing game.
Cut-scene: A brief animation sequence in a videogame.
CPU: Central Processing Unit, or brain of the PC.
Dev kits: Development kits, used for development.
D-pad: Directional pad for a controller.

Dual Shock controller: A controller with two buttons.
Dual Shock 2: A controller with two buttons and two analog sticks.
ECTS: European Computer Trade Show.
E3: Electronic Entertainment Expo, held in Los Angeles.
Frame rate: Number of images (frames) per second in a game. Higher frame rates = smoother gameplay.
FPS: Frames Per Second, or Frames Per Second.
Hack 'n' slash: A genre of game involving a lot of combat.
High res: High resolution.
Real-time: A game that runs in real time.
HUD: Head Up Display.

Icons: Small images, such as a character, a weapon, etc.
Iconography: A series of icons that represent a game's theme.
Low res: Low resolution, or low quality.
L3: Pressing down on the PS2 controller's left stick.
Mini-games: Small games within a game.
Multiplayer: A game that can be played by more than one player.
Polygon: A 3D shape, or a 2D shape, that is used to create a 3D image.
Psones: The Psones, or the Psones, are the Psones.
Real-time: A game that runs in real time.
Second: A unit of time.

Shade: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 2: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 3: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 4: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 5: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 6: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 7: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 8: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 9: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 10: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 11: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 12: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 13: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 14: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 15: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 16: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 17: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 18: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 19: A series of back-to-back updates.
Shade 20: A series of back-to-back updates.

**Not everything
is what it seems**



**WHAT
DVD**

Hardware
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Movies are only the half of it

LARA C CLOTHES FOR THEE

TO CELEBRATE the upcoming launch of the next chapter in the Tomb Raider saga, *Lara Croft Tomb Raider – The Angel of Darkness*, Gamenation and OPS2 have put together five clothing bundles for the fashion conscious gamers out there. The gear is all from the Lara C line of clothing, the official included in each pack are the following items of clothing:

- 1 X LARA TEAM JACKET**
- 1 X LARA JERSEY TOP**
- 1 X B&W BLOCK T-SHIRT**
- 1 X BLACK T-SHIRT**

■ To expand your wardrobe with a new range of Lara gear, simply tell us the name of the new male playable character in the upcoming *Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness* (Hint: Check out last issue's preview in the Monitor section). Follow the comp entry details at the bottom of the page, marking your entry to "Lara C Clothes for Thee."



MASTERFUL MIX

CLUB CULTURE drives through the Summer months, and to help ensure you like out there aren't behind the 8-ball, Universal Dance and OPS2 have put aside five copies of the sterling dance compilation – Clubmix 2002.

This excellent 2-disc collection of dance tracks includes work of artists such as:

BACKSTREET JACK, BROOKE BENDON, DJ SHAMMY PAUL, DANCEWORLD, JAMIROQUAI AND MANY MORE

■ To grab yourself a copy of this classic compilation, all you need to do is name a track from three of the five artists above, and follow the comp entry details at the bottom of the page, marking your entries to "Masterful Mix comp."



THE NEW DVD

COLUMBIA TRI-STAR'S comedy hit *The New Guy* delivers a tongue in cheek take on the ups and downs of high school life that everyone can relate to. The OPS2 crew loved it, and have got together with Columbia to give away five copies of the new DVD release.

■ To be in the running for a copy of *The New Guy*, just mail in and tell us the actor who plays the lead role in the film (Hint: heading to www.sonypictures.com/movie/s/thenevguy/ may help). Follow the comp entry details at the bottom of the page and mark your entries to "The New DVD."



COLUMBIA TRISTAR "THE NEW GUY" DVD SLEEVE

HOW TO ENTER – Send entries to OPS2@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject line or alternatively, send envelopes via snail mail to: Official PlayStation Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 2022. E-mail entrants are entitled to one e-mail per competition only.

Entries should be clearly marked and include: The name of the comp, your name, age, phone number and address. All competitions close January 22, 2003.

Note: Images of prizes as shown above may vary from the appearance of the actual prizes received due to circumstances out of the publisher's control.

NEXT MONTH

PLAYSTATION 2 FEBRUARY ISSUE

RETURN TO VICE CITY

LET OPS2 TAKE YOU ON A TOUR OF THE GAMING PARADISE THAT IS GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

NEXT MONTH
IN OFFICIAL
AUSTRALIAN
PLAYSTATION
MAGAZINE

MIDNIGHT CLUB 2

AUSTRALIAN EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!
ROCKSTAR KEEP CRANKING OUT THE GAMING GOODNESS, HOT ON THE HEELS OF VICE CITY COMES ANOTHER RIPPING ROAD GAME!

DOWN UNDER DEVELOPMENTS

WE COVER THE CONCLAVE OF THE CODERS, CHECKING OUT THE AUSTRALIAN GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE.

TIMESPLITTERS 2 GUIDE

OPS2 GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE TOUGHEST OF TIMESPLITTERS 2'S SINGLE-PLAYER LEVELS.

THE LATEST AND GREATEST GAMES REVIEWED!

INCLUDING:
METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE
SLY COOPER AND THE THEVIUS RACoonUS
APE ESCAPE 2
X-MEN: NEXT DIMENSION
BATTLE ENGINE AQUILA + MANY MORE!

ANOTHER KILLER DEMO DISC!

AMAZING PLAYABLE DEMOS OF:
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2
FORMULA ONE 2003
APE ESCAPE 2
EGGO MANIA
FIFA 2003
ROCKY
AND MUCH MORE!



MIDNIGHT CLUB 2

Set to run rings around the rest



SLY COOPER

More platforming pleasure for PS2



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

The full MGS2 plus over 200 VR missions



TIMESPLITTERS 2

Tips and tricks for the toughest missions





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Ferry Corsten	4 Strings	Kylie Minogue	The Streets

Also available...**THE ANNUAL2003 DVD** - Out 25 NOV

+ THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING +



AVAILABLE NOW

The cover art for 'The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers' for the Game Boy Advance. It features a glowing, golden ring floating in a dark, starry space. The title 'THE LORD OF THE RINGS' is at the top in a stylized font, and 'THE TWO TOWERS' is below it. The Game Boy Advance logo is in the bottom right corner.



PlayStation 2



GAME BOY ADVANCE

[illegible]